

The Funeral Director's Library

By Joy Johnson

We all know how we grieve in four ways and that there are things we can do to help:

Physically: get a checkup, drink lots of water, eat right, get enough sleep, exercise.

Emotionally: cry when you need to, yell in the shower when you're mad, tell your story.

Spiritually: talk to your clergy person, pray, meditate, walk, and notice nature around you.

And **Mentally:** ??? We don't really know all that much but we do know one thing that helps.

Read about grief.

You'll know you're not going crazy.

You'll know you're not alone.

You'll learn some valuable ideas.

The Twenty Best Books for Your Families and Your Library

We are often asked to recommend books or help people select an entire collection both for themselves and for the clients, patients or families. Here are my choices for the twenty best.

For Young Children

- *Lifetimes* (Mellonie and Ingpen) A beautiful way to explain death. Ages 3-8.
- *How I Feel* (Wolfelt) A coloring book of feelings. Ages 3-9.
- *A Complete Book about Death for Kids* (Grollman & Johnson) Only Earl and I would say we wrote the complete book. Ages 5-10.
- *When Dinosaurs Die* (Brown & Brown) One of the most complete and one of the best. Ages 5-12.

For Older Children and Teens

- *Tell Me, Papa* (Johnson & Johnson) First funeral book for kids. Ages 7-12.
- *Facing Change* (O'Toole) Covers many losses and does so simply and well. Ages 9-17.
- *Fire In My Heart, Ice In My Veins* (Traisman) The best-seller for grieving teens.
- *When Death Walks In* (Scrivani) Excellent, small and with very teen artwork. Teens.

Infant Death

- *When Hello Means Goodbye* (Kirk and Schwiebert) The classic for thirty years. Parents.



Joy is co-founder of Centering Corporation, North America's oldest and largest bereavement resource center. She has written or edited more than 150 books on grief and speaks at conferences all over the United States.

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- *This Little While* (Johnson & Johnson) More color, also a classic for years. Parents.
- *Where's Jess?* (Marvin Johnson) For children who have a brother or sister die.
- *Remembering Our Baby* (Keough) A workbook for school-age children.

Also, books by Sherokee Ilse are larger books and excellent resources.

When A Child Dies

- *Children Die, Too* (Johnson & Johnson) One of the earliest parents books. A classic.
- *Goodbye My Child* (Wheeler and Pike) Good for even before the funeral.

Widows and Widowers

- *A Journey Through Widowhood* (Presnell) Personal story with lots of good advice.
- *Handbook for Widowers* (Ames) What every man knows and needs to remember.
- *The Widower's Toolbox* (Schaefer and Bekkers) New and absolutely excellent.
- *Cowbells and Courage* (Page) For the older man, this is not only helpful, it's also humorous.

Two Books to Definitely Give Away:

While the books we've listed can and should be given to your families as a gift from your funeral home, if you only select two to start out try:

- *Grief: What It Is and What We Can Do* (Johnson & Johnson) The simple, small, inexpensive "bible" for grievers.
- *Children Grieve, Too* (Johnson & Johnson) Explains in just a few pages how children grieve, what to look for at different ages, and how to support the child. Also small and inexpensive.

In Your Children's Area

Two resources stand out to care for young grievers. My Friend Doll is a big, friendly doll to hold and cuddle and it has Velcro faces for feelings such as mad, sad, scared, and happy. And the new game, Doggone Grief! is an excellent way to keep kids occupied while they learn.

All these books and more are on the Centering Corporation website (www.centering.org) or are available through Amazon.com. When we started Centering nearly 34 years ago, there were only seven books on grief. Now there are more than a thousand, and you, the funeral director, have been an important part of America's increased recognition of the importance of grief and its impact on our lives, as well as teaching people how to begin, through the funeral or memorial service, to face the journey ahead with hope and healing. We appreciate you.