

Bereavement Guide:

Resources and Coping Strategies for Grieving Families



NEMOURS
CHILDREN'S HEALTH®



"What a beautiful difference one single life makes."



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Letter

Dear Families,

We recognize that you are grieving and we want to support you during this time. This Bereavement Guide has been created as one way to support you in your grief, regardless of what that may look or feel like. As you navigate life following the loss of your child, we hope this guide will provide you with validation in your feelings, an understanding of what you and other loved ones may experience, and resources that may help you moving forward.

With love,

Nemours Children's Hospital, Florida



Grief

Grief is often marked by intense feelings.

Following the death of a loved one, you may experience intense and overwhelming feelings. These feelings might include shock, sadness, despair, emptiness, anxiety, fear, guilt, anger or powerlessness. You may experience physical pain. It is important to understand that these feelings and emotions are a normal part of the grieving process.

Grief is a natural response to loss.

It is part of human nature to have feelings associated with change, especially after a loss. It is okay to allow yourself to feel your emotions as you work through this journey.

Grief is unique to each individual and situation.

Grief is different for everyone, and no one can tell you how to feel, when to feel, or how long to feel the impact of loss. Feelings related to grief often come and go, and their strength varies over time.

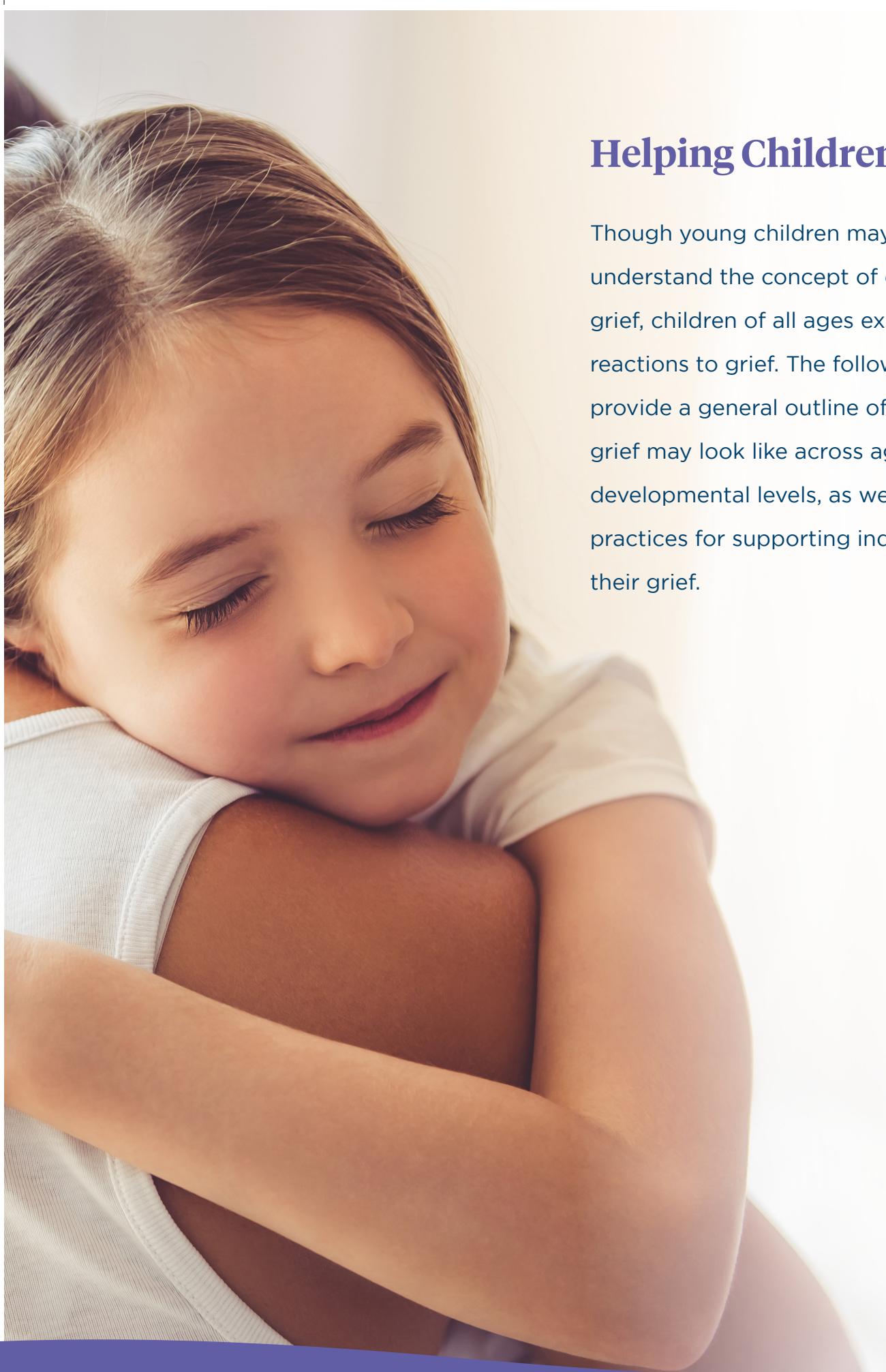
Grief is not linear.

There is no timeline for the feelings experienced within grief. It is okay if your grief does not follow a set of stages or phases. Your grief may be accompanied by hope on some days and intense negative feelings on others, especially during holidays and other significant days. It is okay if these feelings do not go in a specific order.

When to Seek Professional Help

There is no timeline for grief and strong emotions are often a typical part of the process. While the support of family and friends is invaluable, some people who are grieving benefit from talking to an experienced grief counselor to process their feelings and implement coping strategies. People who make the decision to seek professional counseling often do so based on the length and/or intensity of their grief. Other people make the decision because they find it difficult to function in their day-to-day life. Calling a counselor or therapist is not a sign of weakness.





Helping Children Grieve

Though young children may not fully understand the concept of death or grief, children of all ages experience reactions to grief. The following pages provide a general outline of what grief may look like across ages and developmental levels, as well as best practices for supporting individuals in their grief.

Grief in Infants and Toddlers

0-2 Years

At ages 0-2, infants and toddlers do not yet understand the concept of death. They can, however, feel the losses of attachment and familiarity that come with the death of a significant person in their life.



Grief Signs

- Crying more than usual
- Looking for their loved one who has died
- Stranger anxiety
- Decreased interest in things they typically enjoy
- Wanting to be held more
- Regression in milestones

Tips for Caregivers

- Maintain routines
- Keep them around familiar people
- Provide comfort items
- Hold and cuddle when possible



Grief in Preschoolers

3-5 Years

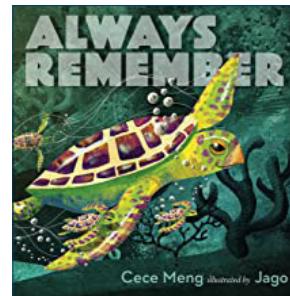
Though preschool age children are beginning to understand death, their understandings of it are sometimes rooted in misconceptions. They may not grasp the fact that death is permanent and that their loved one will not come back.



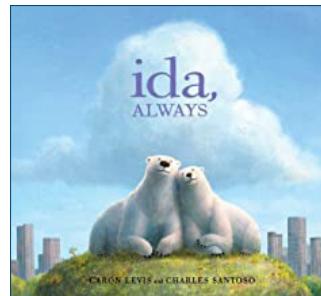
Grief Signs

- Asking a lot of questions
- Searching for the person who has died
- Increased crying, clinginess or "acting out"
- Decreased interest in things they typically enjoy
- Temporary regression

Books to Read



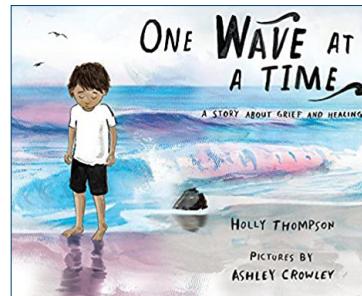
Always Remember
by Cece Meng



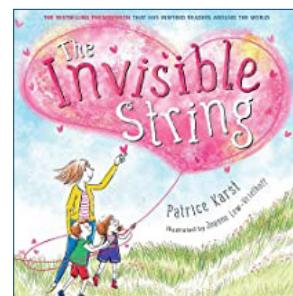
ida, ALWAYS
by Caron Levis



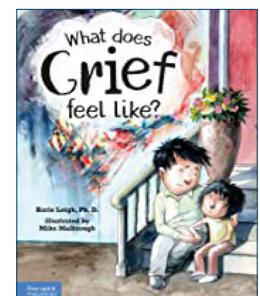
My Yellow Balloon
by Tiffany Papageorge



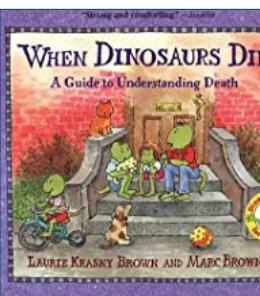
One Wave at a Time
by Holly Thompson



The Invisible String
by Patrice Karst



What Does Grief
Feel Like?
by Korie Leigh



When Dinosaurs Die
by Laura Krasny Brown
and Marc Brown

Grief in School-Age Children

6-12 Years

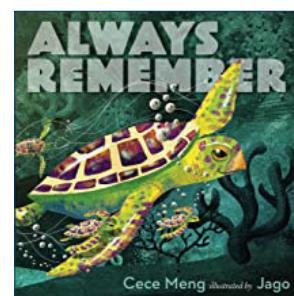
Children in their school-age years are often beginning to think more abstractly and they will likely be able to grasp the idea that death is permanent. They may feel that their loved one's death is their fault or worry that another loved one will die.



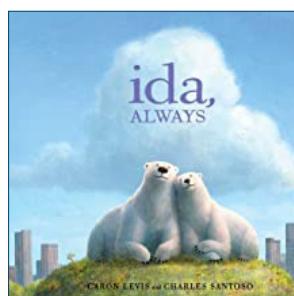
Grief Signs

- Asking a lot of questions
- Feelings of guilt about the death of their loved one
- Worrying about their own death or that of others
- Decreased interest in things they usually enjoy
- Behavioral issues or expressions of anger
- Changes in typical habits
- Demonstrating death-related themes in play

Books to Read



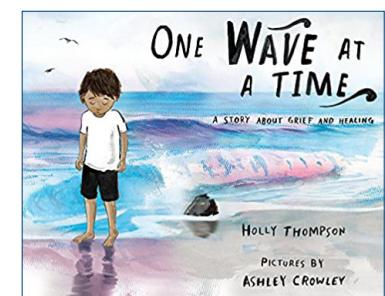
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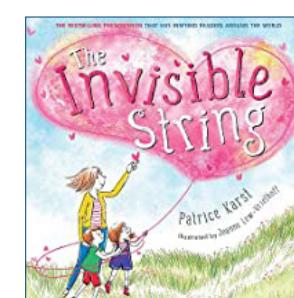
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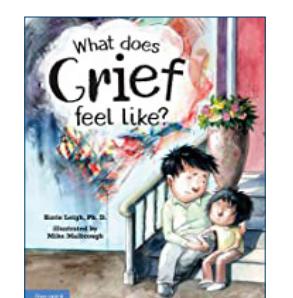
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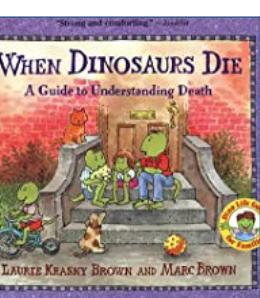
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Grief in Adolescents

13-18 Years

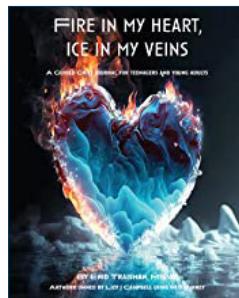
By adolescence, individuals are typically able to understand that death is a part of life. Teenagers are learning who they are and how to transition to independence. With this, it can often be difficult for them to ask for help with coping when experiencing grief.



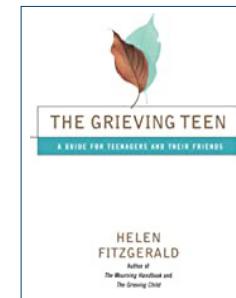
Grief Signs

- Withdrawal or isolation
- Experiencing intense feelings such as guilt, fear and anger
- Using humor to mask feelings
- Wanting to be closer to family or friends
- Risk-taking behavior
- Temporary regression
- Feeling physically sick
- Trying to please everyone

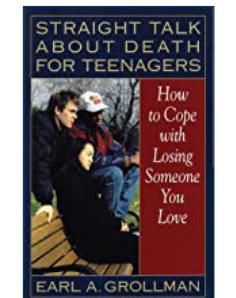
Books to Read



Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins
by Enid Samuel-Traisman



The Grieving Teen
by Helen Fitzgerald



Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers
by Earl A. Grollman

Grief in Adults

18+ Years

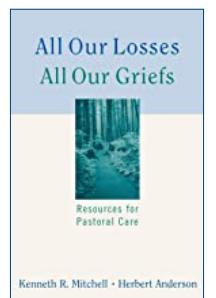
It is easy for adults to feel alone in their grief. It is important for you and other adults to recognize when things are hard and support yourselves and each other during this time.



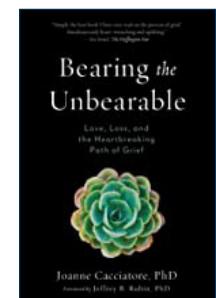
Grief Signs

- Denial
- Intense feelings of sadness, guilt, anger, confusion or helplessness
- Feeling physically sick
- Panic attacks
- Sleep problems
- Difficulty concentrating
- Yearning or longing for the deceased

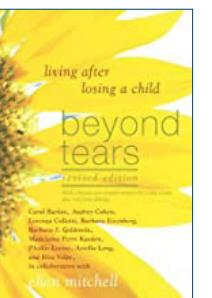
Books to Read



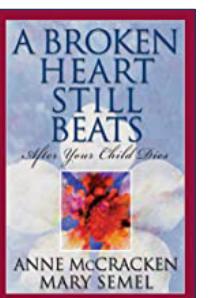
All Our Losses, All Our Griefs
by Kenneth R. Mitchell and Herbert Anderson



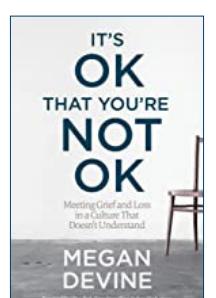
Bearing the Unbearable
by Joanne Caciato, PhD



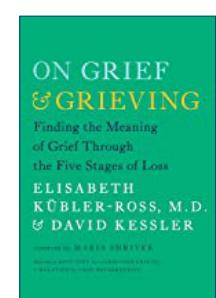
Beyond Tears
by Ellen Mitchell



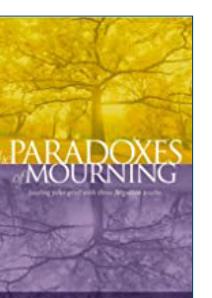
A Broken Heart Still Beats
by Anne McCracken and Mary Semel



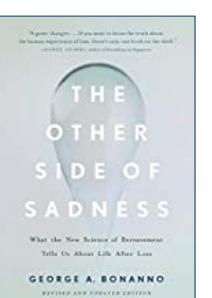
It's OK That You're Not OK
by Megan Devine



On Grief and Grieving
by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler



Paradoxes of Mourning
by Alan Wolfelt



The Other Side of Sadness
by George A. Bonanno



Grief Activities

The following are some activities that can be helpful for grieving individuals to do at home

Memory Box

Decorate a box and fill it with things that remind you of your loved one. *The Memory Box* by Joanna Rawland can be a great resource to use alongside this activity.

Grief Journal

Set aside a special journal or notebook to write down feelings and thoughts that you may be experiencing.

Loved One Jar

Write memories, favorite qualities, notes or other things that remind you of your loved one on pieces of paper and fill a jar with them.

Write a Letter

Write a letter about all the things you would like to say to your loved one.

Message Bubbles

Think of a message you would like to share with your loved one. You can either write it on dissolving paper or whisper it into the bubble wand. Watch your message float away as you blow the bubbles.

Rock Painting

Paint a rock with special colors, letters, words or symbols that remind you of your loved one. Place the rock in a special place so that you can think of this person every time you see it.

Memory Treasure Hunt

Go on a treasure hunt for things that remind you of your loved one. You could create your own prompts or look for something that reminds you of one of the following:

- A special memory
- The way they looked
- Something you liked doing together
- Something that you laughed about together
- How much they loved you

Memories Playlist

Create a playlist of music that reminds you of your loved one. You may include songs with their name in them, songs you listened to together, or songs that you think they would like.



Resources

Florida Grief Support Services

Angel of Hope of Central Florida provides grief support after the death of a child at any age. 407.260.9222, AngelofHopeCFL.org

Bereaved Survivors of Homicide in Orlando is a professionally facilitated support group for the friends and family members who have had a loved one taken by murder. 407.254.7248, bshcentralflorida.org

Children's Bereavement Center in Miami provides peer support groups for children, teens and young adults who are grieving the death of a loved one. 305.668.4902, childbereavement.org

Dustin Project in Longwood, Fla., is a spiritually-based grief counseling program designed to assist students in the bereavement process following the death of someone they love or know. 407.701.9207, dustinproject.org

GriefShare is a national organization that serves grieving children and adults throughout Florida. 800.395.5755, griefshare.org for local chapter information in your state.

H.A.L.O.S. - Healing After a Loved One's Suicide in Pinellas, Clermont, Orlando and Lutz, Fla., provides support to grieving adults who have experienced the loss of a loved one to suicide. 352.978.6081, halosflorida.org

H.E.A.L. - Helping Endure Infant Loss in Orlando provides grief support after miscarriage, stillbirth and infant death. 407.303.5715, floridahospitalwomen.com

Hospice of the Comforter's Horizons Bereavement Center in Altamonte Springs, Fla., serves grieving students and adults. 407.682.0808, hospiceofthecomforter.org

New Hope for Kids in Maitland, Fla., serves grieving children, adolescents and their family members. 407.599.0909, newhopeforkids.org

Suncoast Kid's Place in Lutz, Fla., serves children, teens and their families that have experienced the death of a significant person. 813.990.0216, suncoastkidsplace.org

The Compassionate Friends, Inc., is a national organization that provides grief support after the death of a child. 877.969.0010, compassionatefriends.org (for local chapter information in your state)



Additional Resources

The Foundation for Grieving Children identifies state-by-state grief support services for children and families. foundationforgrievingchildren.org

Community Hospice Programs exist in most communities throughout the country. Some of these programs offer bereavement services to the general community. To find a hospice near you, go to the National Hospice and Palliative Care's website, Caring Connections, caringinfo.org.

Summer Bereavement Camps for children exist throughout the United States. Conduct an internet search for your geographic area. One such program is Comfort Zone Camps, located in Richmond, Va., with satellite locations in N.J., Calif., and Mass. 866.488.5679 comfortzonecamp.org

Additional Bereavement Resources such as family counseling programs, child life specialists, mental health agencies and faith-based programs may be identified by consulting with clergy, social workers, school guidance counselors, community information and referral programs like the Mental Health Associations of Central Florida..

Professional Counselors in Private Practice are available in most communities. These individuals may be credentialed as social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists or professional counselors. Depending on the state, some nurses and clergy have counseling certification as well. Many counselors are covered by health insurance plans, however not all accept insurance so this is important to clarify. Ask for recommendations from people you know. You may want to speak with the counselor over the phone before scheduling an appointment to see if you think he or she is the right person for you. Clarify information about fees and their experience in working with bereavement issues.

Internet Resources

- Alive Alone alivealone.org
- Bereaved Parents of USA bereavedparentsusa.org
- Compassionate Friends compassionatefriends.org
- Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children & Families dougy.org
- First Candle (Neonatal loss/SIDS) firstcandle.org
- Grief Net: Internet grief support community griefnet.org
- Grief Share: Faith-based grief support groups griefshare.org
- Grieving Dads Project grievingdads.com
- MISS Foundation: Support for grieving families missfoundation.org
- Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death, MEND mend.org
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving MADD.org
- National Alliance for Grieving Children nacg.org
- Nemours KidsHealth kidshealth.org
- SHARE Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support nationalshare.org
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Resource Center sidscenter.org
- The Finley Project thefinleyproject.com
- The Tears Foundation thetearsfoundation.org

Nemours Children's Remembers

Join Nemours Children's Florida in November of each year to remember the life of your child. Invitations will be sent in the months leading up to the event.

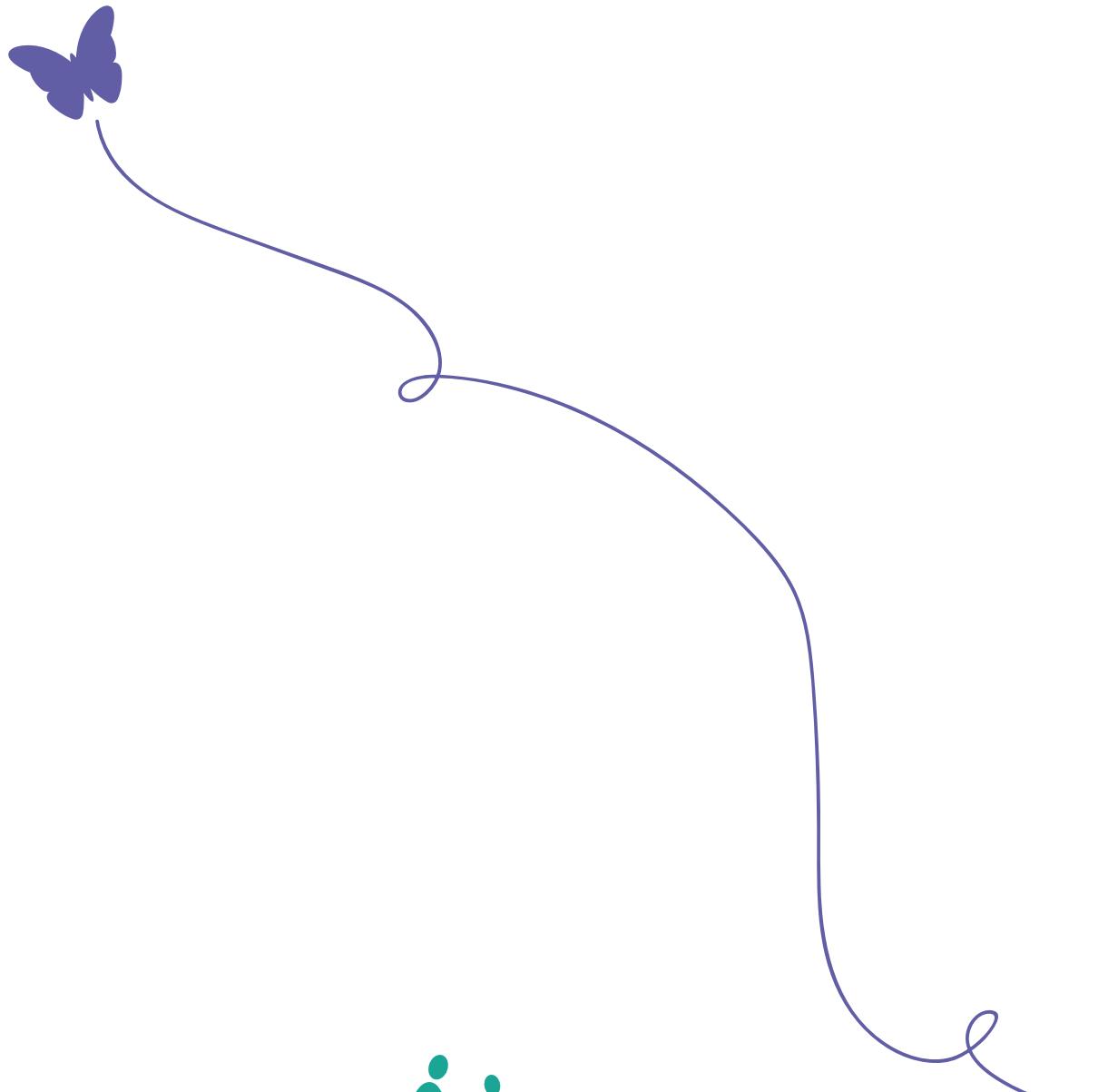
Next Steps

Please see our Funeral Resource Guide to support you in your immediate next steps.



For further resources and information, please call the Nemours Children's, Florida nursing supervisor at 407.567.4420





Well Beyond Medicine

6535 Nemours Parkway, Orlando, FL 32827