



## **Child & Family Grief Guide-** *In the midst of COVID-19*



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## Talking with your children about COVID-19

Kids worry more when they are kept in the dark. It is important to keep them informed on an age appropriate level, provide comfort, and give them practical tasks to help them feel like they are doing something to help. Below is the link to, and text from, the professionals at Kids Health with some information about how to do just that:

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/coronavirus-how-talk-child.html>

Your kids are hearing about coronavirus (COVID-19). You want to make sure they get reliable information — and you want them to hear it from you. Here's how to talk about it.

### **Find Out What Your Child Already Knows**

Ask questions geared to your child's age level. For older kids, you might ask, "Are people in school talking about coronavirus? What are they saying?" For younger children, you could say, "Have you heard grownups talking about a new sickness that's going around?" This gives you a chance to learn how much kids know — and to find out if they're hearing the wrong information.

Follow your child's lead. Some kids may want to spend time talking. But if your kids don't seem interested or don't ask a lot of questions, that's OK.

### **Offer comfort — and honesty.**

Focus on helping your child feel safe, but be truthful. Don't offer more detail than your child is interested in. For example, if kids ask about school closings, address their questions. But if the topic doesn't come up, there's no need to raise it unless it happens.

If your child asks about something and you don't know the answer, say so. Use the question as a chance to find out together. Check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for up-to-date, reliable information about coronavirus (COVID-19). That way, you have the facts and kids don't see headlines about deaths and other scary information.

Speak calmly and reassuringly. Explain that most people who get sick feel like they have a cold or the flu. Kids pick up on it when parents worry. So when you talk about coronavirus and the news, use a calm voice and try not to seem upset.

Give kids space to share their fears. It's natural for kids to worry, "Could I be next? Could that happen to me?" Let your child know that kids don't seem to get as sick as adults. Let them know they can always come to you for answers or to talk about what scares them.

Know when they need guidance. Be aware of how your kids get news and information, especially older kids who go online. Point them to age-appropriate content so they don't end up finding news shows or outlets that scare them or have incorrect information.

## Help Kids Feel in Control

Give your child specific things they can do to feel in control. Teach kids that getting lots of sleep and washing their hands well and often can help them stay strong and well. Explain that regular hand washing also helps stop viruses from spreading to others. Be a good role model and let your kids see you washing your hands often!

Talk about all the things that are happening to keep people safe and healthy. Young kids might be reassured to know that hospitals and doctors are prepared to treat people who get sick. Older kids might be comforted to know that scientists are working to develop a vaccine. These talks also prepare kids for changes in their normal routine if schools or childcare centers close in the future.

Put news stories in context. If they ask, explain that death from the virus is still rare, despite what they might hear. Watch the news with your kids so you can filter what they hear.

Kids and teens often worry more about family and friends than themselves. For example, if kids hear that older people are more likely to be seriously ill, they might worry about their grandparents. Letting them call or Skype with older relatives can help them feel reassured about loved ones.

Let your kids know that it's normal to feel stressed out at times. Everyone does. Recognizing these feelings and knowing that stressful times pass and life gets back to normal can help children build resilience.

## Keep the Conversation Going

Keep checking in with your child. Use talking about coronavirus as a way to help kids learn about their bodies, like how the immune system fights off disease.

Talk about current events with your kids often. It's important to help them think through stories they hear about. Ask questions: What do you think about these events? How do you think these things happen? Such questions also encourage conversation about non-news topics.

Reviewed by: Jennifer Shroff Pendley, PhD

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## HELPING CHILDREN COPE

Your children may respond differently to an outbreak depending on their age. Below are some reactions according to age group and the best ways you can respond:

AGE GROUP	REACTIONS	HOW TO HELP
<b>PRESCHOOL</b>	Fear of being alone, bad dreams Speech difficulties Loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation, bed-wetting Change in appetite Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors	Patience and tolerance Provide reassurance (verbal and physical) Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story-telling Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime Maintain regular family routines Avoid media exposure
<b>SCHOOL-AGE (ages 6-12)</b>	Irritability, whining, aggressive behavior Clinging, nightmares Sleep/appetite disturbance Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches) Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest Competition for parents' attention Forgetfulness about chores and new information learned at school	Patience, tolerance, and reassurance Play sessions and staying in touch with friends through telephone and Internet Regular exercise and stretching Engage in educational activities (workbooks, educational games) Participate in structured household chores Set gentle but firm limits Discuss the current outbreak and encourage questions. Include what is being done in the family and community Encourage expression through play and conversation Help family create ideas for enhancing health promotion behaviors and maintaining family routines Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school Address any stigma or discrimination occurring and clarify misinformation
<b>ADOLESCENT (ages 13-18)</b>	Physical symptoms (headaches, rashes, etc.) Sleep/appetite disturbance Agitation or decrease in energy, apathy Ignoring health promotion behaviors Isolating from peers and loved ones Concerns about stigma and injustices Avoiding/cutting school	Patience, tolerance, and reassurance Encourage continuation of routines Encourage discussion of outbreak experience with peers, family (but do not force) Stay in touch with friends through telephone, Internet, video games Participate in family routines, including chores, supporting younger siblings, and planning strategies to enhance health promotion behaviors Limit media exposure, talking about what they have seen/heard including at school Discuss and address stigma, prejudice and potential injustices occurring during outbreak

Source: Reproduced from Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope With the Coronavirus Disease 2019, by National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network, retrieved from <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-caregiver-guide-to-helping-families-cope-with-the-coronavirus-disease-2019>

## **Mindfulness Apps & Websites for Kids**

The mental and physical benefits of mindfulness and yoga are widely recognized, not just for adults, but for kids too. The word “mindfulness” can be scary, and you might be thinking “my kids will never do that.” There are, however, easy, quick, 2-5 minute ways to begin introducing these skills to kids of almost any age. These shorter versions will begin to lay the groundwork for emotional regulation, stress reduction, and brain-strengthening benefits in the long term. And, if nothing else, right now, a timed, structured opportunity to unplug (even if the guided story comes from an app) can be a positive way to focus energy. All of the apps listed below have a free version.

### **Children’s Bedtime Meditations for Sleep & Calm – App**

This app contains various mindfulness exercises and guided meditations to help children relax and unwind at bedtime.

### **Cosmic Kids Yoga – App/You Tube**

Cosmic Kids Yoga has fun, engaging yoga for elementary age kids. There is an app and there are a lot of their videos uploaded on you tube. <https://www.cosmickids.com>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>

### **Breathe & Learn**

Breathe & Learn is a California based children’s yoga program. The owner Joan Plake has made some of her digital downloads available for free; enter promotion code “BREATHE” at checkout.

<https://www.breatheandlearn.com/free>

### **Stop Breathe and Think – App**

Below are the links to information about the two versions of this app. You can actually choose how you are feeling first from several prompts and this app will suggest some appropriate guided relaxations for your current mood/challenge.

Kids <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/kids/>

Teens <https://www.stopbreathethink.com>

### **Smiling Mind – App**

You can choose a program built specifically for your child’s age and preferences in this app going all the way up to teenagers.

### **Mindfulness for Teens – Website**

This website is a great way to introduce a teen to mindfulness. There are testimonial videos from teens who have really experienced benefit and a full library of guided relaxation audio files available for free. <http://mindfulnessforteens.com>

## Grief-Related Resources

### National Alliance for Grieving Children

This website has links to finding local support and resources pages, webinars, and has posted a “Responding to Change and Loss” toolkit/activity book for free download

<https://childrengrieve.org/about-us/news/208-covid-19>

### The Dougy Center

A nationally recognized resource for grieving families, the Dougy Center contains resources, tip sheets, and activities for parents, kids & teens. They also produce the “Grief Out Loud” podcast.

<https://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/>

<https://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/grief-out-loud-podcast/>

### Sesame Street in Communities: Helping Kids Grieve

This website has articles for parents as well as videos, online activities and printables for younger children about grief, as well as related topics.

<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/grief/>

### Coalition to Support Grieving Students

This resource has a wealth of information for schools and educators, as well as parents and community members, including links to order free resources.

<https://grievingstudents.org/audiences/family-community-members/>

### What’s Your Grief?

Contains articles for parents and older teens about a variety of grief-related topics, and a Smart Parents Guide to Grieving Children.

<https://whatsyourgrief.com>

<https://whatsyourgrief.com/smart-parents-guide-to-grieving-children/>

### Grief Booklist for Kids

Title	Author	Publication date	Suggested age
<i>A Complete Book About Death for Kids</i>	Earl Grollman and Joy Johnson	2006	9 – 12 years
<i>After a Suicide</i>	The Dougy Center	2001	8 – 12 years
<i>Am I Still a Sister?</i>	Alicia M. Sims	1988	6 years and above
<i>Angel Catcher for Kids</i>	Amy Eldon	2002	5 years and above
<i>Gentle Willow: A Story for Children About Dying</i>	Joyce C. Mills, PhD	1993	4 – 8 years
<i>Goodbye Mousie</i>	Robie H. Harris	2001	4 – 8 years
<i>Help Me Say Goodbye: Activities for Helping Kids when A Special Person Dies</i>	Janis Silverman	1999	5 – 12 years
<i>I Had a Friend Named Peter</i>	Janice Cohn, DSW	1987	4 – 8 years
<i>I Miss You: A First Look at Death</i>	Pat Thomas and Leslie Harker	2001	4 – 8 years
<i>Lifetimes The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children</i>	Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen	1999	3- 8 years
<i>Saying Goodbye</i>	Jim Boulden	1992	5 - 8 years
<i>Talking About Death; A Dialogue Between Parent and Child</i>	Earl Grollman	1990	8 years and above
<i>The Fall of Freddie the Leaf</i>	Leo Buscaglia, PhD	1982	4 years and above
<i>The Invisible String</i>	Patrice Karst	2000	3 years and above
<i>The Next Place</i>	Warren Hanson	1997	5 years and above
<i>The Velveteen Rabbit</i>	Margery Williams	1922	5 years and above
<i>Water Bugs &amp; Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Young Children</i>	Doris Stickney	2004	5 years and above
<i>What's Heaven?</i>	Maria Shriver	1994	4 – 8 years
<i>What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?</i>	Trevor Romaini	1999	9 – 12 years
<i>When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death</i>	Laurie Kransy and Mark Brown	1998	5 – 8 years
<i>When Someone Very Special Dies</i>	Marge Heegaard	1988	6 – 12 years
<i>Where Do Balloons Go?: An Uplifting Mystery</i>	Jamie Lee Curtis	2000	4 – 8 years

## Parents with Grieving Children

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>
<i>Acknowledgement: Opening to the Grief Unacceptable Loss</i>	Peter Leech and Zeva Singer
<i>Crossing the Bridge: Creating Ceremonies for Grieving and Healing from Life's Losses</i>	Sydney Barbara Metrick
<i>The Gift of a Memory: A Keepsake to Commemorate the Loss of a Loved One</i>	Marianne Richmond
<i>Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss</i>	Claudia Jewett Jarratt
<i>Life and Loss: A Guide to Help Grieving Children</i>	Linda Goldman
<i>The Moon Balloon: A Journey of Hope and Discovery for Children and Families</i>	Loan Drescher
<i>On Children and Death: How Children and Their Parents Can and Do Cope with Death</i>	Elizabeth Kubler-Ross
<i>The Worst Loss: How Families Heal From the Death of a Child</i>	Barbara D. Rosof
<i>35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child</i>	The Dougy Center



## 10 Things Grief Counselors Want Parents to Know

1. **Talk about it.** Children need age-appropriate information and about illness trajectory and death. Children are subject to believe they may have caused the illness or death by doing, or not doing, something to cause this. Be honest and direct. Parents often feel pressure to say things just the “right” way, but there is no right way. Be honest, available, and accepting of their emotions.
2. **It’s not one conversation.** You may gear yourself up for “the big talk,” only to find your child shrugging and wanting to go play; alternatively, they may not want to talk. There’s no right way for it to go. Let them know the door is always open for them to talk with you more. As children get older and become more able to handle nuanced conversations, they will likely ask more questions, as they need a new understanding about what happened to their loved one.
3. **It’s OK to not be at your best right now.** Or in four weeks or four months from now. Grief is an emotional, physical, mental and spiritual experience that will affect your ability to parent how you want to or how you believe you should. Grant yourself forgiveness and permission not to be perfect. Engage your network of support so that you’re not doing it alone.
4. **It’s OK to cry in front of your children.** They need to see you struggle in order to learn how to handle difficult situations for themselves. This is a great opportunity to model your feelings. “I got really emotional when I saw your Dad’s coffee cup on the shelf. I just needed to cry for a few minutes to let those feelings out.”
5. **Don’t let them think it’s their job to take care of you or fix your feelings.** “I am having a hard time right now, but I know what I need to do to help myself. It’s your job to go to school, soccer, and have fun with your friends – that is what you helping me looks like.”
6. **Their grief won’t look like your grief.** Children need to play, create, and move their bodies to allow grief feelings to move through them. Violence, death, loss and finding are common themes in play and are not on their own worrisome. A child may smile and look like he’s having fun while crashing a toy car into the wall. Don’t be fooled; he is actively dealing with his grief.
7. **Rushing a child to therapy may not be necessary.** Often, the time immediately after a death is less stressful for a child than we fear; the crisis is over, the panic is gone, and the child returns to his or her routine. A therapist or counselor may be most helpful giving you ideas and strategies to help your children with their grief, especially in the beginning. Many children struggle more several months after the death of a loved one, and may benefit from more support later on.
8. **Their reactions may surprise you.** Some children may laugh when told a parent is dying. They do not think death is funny; laughing is normal way to discharge tension or anxiety. They may have practical, concrete questions appropriate to their cognitive stage, but that may seem tactless to you in the context of social taboos. One child asked her mother, “If Grandpa isn’t coming back, can I have his iPhone?” Try to see this not as insensitivity, but a reflection of normal brain development for their age.
9. **You don’t have to have all the answers.** A great response to those difficult questions (such as, “What happens after someone dies?”) could be “Hmm, that’s a great question. I’m not sure. What do you think?”
10. **Reassure them that they will always be taken care of.** If there are changes to routines or childcare plans, communicate this with the child in advance and share your contingency plans. For example, “Mom used to pick you up from school, but now it will be Grandma. If Grandma can’t come, it will be our neighbor Mrs. Jones. I will always make sure someone is there to get you.” Some families even have practical discussions about who a child would want to live with if the surviving parent were to suddenly die. It is important and comforting for children to know there is a plan.

## **Do-at-Home Grief Activities for Kids & Teens**

### **Instructions – Please read!**

Safety first! If there are steps that require scissors, please assist your child to whatever level they need, or do it for them. If there are very young children/infants in your house for whom small pieces could become choking hazards, be sure to designate an area for older children to work.

There are no rules about what these projects have to look like at the end. It doesn't matter if the end piece of art barely resembles the activity or if your child hears what you are suggesting and decides to completely change it up. It doesn't matter if things are the color they are "supposed" to be or if they don't look anything like what your child says they are. It doesn't matter if they start an activity and decide five minutes later that they are done. These activities are presented to provide some stress-relieving ways to fill your days, not to create additional stress. Similarly, please do not push your child to talk about what their artwork means to them, unless they would like to do so. The act of creating is therapeutic in itself, and it is a gift to give your child a space to experience this without the pressure of putting words to their experience.

Many of these activities can be enjoyed by most age groups. There are some geared more specifically toward younger, and at the bottom there are a few that are specifically designed for older kids/teens. But overall, most age groups could engage in the majority of these in some way. You may want to do some of these activities with your child, as a family.

Lastly, some of these projects may suggest materials you do not have. That does not have to mean you can't do that activity. There are often ways to substitute various items for the ones listed here. Many of these activities can be thought of as a starting point and you can be as creative and innovative with materials as you need to be.

## **Activities with Just Paper and a Drawing Material**

### **My Favorite Memory**

This one is just about as simple as it sounds. Ask your child to think of their favorite memory and use whatever drawing materials they have to illustrate part of it. You can be more specific and talk about a favorite memory with your family member who has died, a favorite memory since that person has died, etc.

### **Peaceful/Favorite Place**

During a time of heightened anxiety, it can be helpful for children to be able to imagine a place where they feel safe and comfortable. Have your child think about a favorite place, a place they find comforting or peaceful. It can be real or imaginary. And then ask them to create any part of it they want on the paper. If you want to take it further, you can ask them what it is about the place they like so much. You can explain to them that any time they want they can close their eyes and imagine themselves there. You can help them practice this by having them find a comfortable place to sit or lie down and close their eyes. Ask them to imagine they are in their favorite place and ask them to notice what the temperature feels like? Do they hear anything? Do they smell anything? What colors do they see? Etc.

### **Make a Postcard**

Imagine you could design and send a postcard to your loved one. What would you like to tell them? Children may enjoy imagining a response from their loved one and creating an additional postcard from that person to themselves.

Alternatively, your child could make and send a postcard to a friend or loved one they are not able to see. You will just need a postcard stamp and a thin cereal box or similar-weight cardboard. A postcard must be between 5" and 6" long and 3.5 x 4.25" high.

### **Anagram**

Have your child choose either the name of the person who died or their relationship (for example, Sarah, Mom, Grandpa). Write the word down the left side of your paper. Next to each letter, have your child think of a word to describe that person.

Example:

M – Marvelous

O – Outstanding

M – Maker of cookies

This activity can be repeated for others in the child's life.

### **Timeline**

Have your child draw a long horizontal line on a piece of paper. The beginning of the line is their date of birth and the end of the line can be today's date, or any date of their choosing. Along the line, have the child make marks that represent significant changes in their family, personality, friendships, homes, or schools. Using stickers or markers, participants can write or draw pictures or symbols to represent the events marked on the timeline. If you have information about the child's infancy or early childhood, it may be fun to share some of this

with the child (e.g., family trips they may have been too young to remember; a baptism or other religious/cultural ritual). The child may want to end the timeline with today, or continue into the future while imagining what they would like their life to be like.

### **Feelings Memory Game**

Have your child divide up a piece of paper into 10 (or more) sections by drawing one line down the middle and four horizontal lines. On each line, write the name of a feeling twice, with one word in each box. You should end up with 5 different feeling words written two times each. (You can also use index cards if those are available). Cut or tear the boxes so that 10 individual cards result. Turn the cards over and arrange into a grid. Take turns choosing two cards at a time until a match is found. The person who found the match shares a time when they felt that emotion, and, if applicable, how they coped with it or how they would cope with it in the future. Possible emotions: happy, angry, sad, disappointed, proud, guilty, jealous, confident, silly)

(some activities have been modified from clinical grief activities handbook)

### **Activities Using Mostly Household Items**

#### **A Butterfly a Day**



Materials:

Paper & drawing material

Scissors

Tape

Optional: collage materials (ex: magazine pictures) and glue

With some scissors and any kind of drawing material you can turn a sheet a paper into multiple butterfly shapes. You can make multiple butterfly shapes all in one sitting, or, while you are stuck at home, you can turn this into an on-going activity that happens every day, a few times a week, or whenever you remember. One of the most fun parts of this is to watch the group of butterflies grow. So before you start, find a window, a wall, or a large piece of paper to which

you can add your butterflies as you go. This activity can be fun on its own, or choose a question to which your child can respond through drawing or writing on each butterfly. For example: If (loved one) were a butterfly, where do you think they would go? If you were were a butterfly, where would you fly? What will be the strengths that will help you/our family get through this time? (list of possible strengths is below)

## Positive Character Traits

kind	reliable	easygoing
generous	energetic	creative
enthusiastic	upbeat	considerate
responsible	understanding	thoughtful
brave	confident	artistic
honest	observant	cooperative
hard working	compassionate	cheerful
imaginative	insightful	motivated
intelligent	witty	courageous
trustworthy	flexible	open-minded
optimistic	supportive	patient
unselfish	organized	reasonable
considerate	determined	outgoing
helpful	humorous	independent
encouraging	respectful	articulate
polite	caring	dedicated
careful	empathetic	focused
ambitious	forgiving	generous
modest	persistent	quiet
reliable	sincere	thorough
clever	accepting	positive

## Sock Bubbles



### Materials:

Empty Plastic Bottle (soda bottles work best, but any bottle you can cut, get a sock around, and that has a mouth piece small enough for your child to blow into will work)

Scissors

Old Sock

Dish Soap and Water

Talk to your child about how concentrating on their breathing can be a helpful tool to deal with anxiety and difficult feelings that come with grief. This is a fun way to practice modulating the breath.

First, an adult should cut the end off of the plastic bottle and take care not to let small children touch sharp edges. You will want to cut enough off so that when you pull the sock over the cut end it will stay on. You can also duct tape it to the bottle if that feels more secure. Dip the sock covered end of the bottle into a shallow bowl with a mixture of dish soap and water, blow through the mouth piece of the bottle, and a bubble snake will start to come out the sock end of the bottle.

### Rain Stick



Materials:

Paper Towel Roll

Rice

Aluminum Foil

Paper

Scissors

Pencil/Pen

Tape (stronger, such as masking tape, is better, but Scotch tape will work, too)

Optional: Colored paper, yarn, etc. to decorate the outside

Your rain sticks can be as wild as the example in the picture, or as simple as a few shapes drawn on the outside of the tube. First, trace the end of the tube on your piece of paper. Cut out a circle about 1 inch larger than the circle you've traced. Next, cut several slits from the outside of the large circle to the line where you traced the roll. You will end up with tabs going all the way around what looks like a paper sun. Choose one side of the roll and position the circle on it, fold the tabs around the tube and tape them on. You want to tape them on very well because children enjoy shaking these! Next, crumple your aluminum foil in a jagged, messy cylinder shape that is almost the same length as but slightly slimmer than the tube. The bendy and more jagged, the better, as long as it still fits in the tube. (Aluminum foil can become sharp when bent, so do this step yourself or younger children). Slip your aluminum foil inside and pour your rice in. You want to fill it about  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$ -way with rice. Close up the other side the way you closed the first. Add some extra tape just in case! Decorate the outside however you want, and then start flipping it over from side to side to hear the rain.

Younger children will enjoy just shaking and moving to the sounds. Older children or teens may want to spend more time on the decoration of their rain sticks. You could also designate a special family use for the rain stick, such as a talking stick to be used at special times – for example, sharing feelings before bedtime, or high points of your day before a meal.

### Recyclables - People



Materials:  
 Cardboard  
 Paper  
 Plastic Bottles or recyclables  
 Drawing Material  
 Scissors & Glue  
 Optional: Paint

You can turn old plastic bottles/containers into people. Have your child pick a container and remove any plastic wrapping from the outside. If you have paint, they can decorate it that way, but this is not necessary. Allow them to draw a face for their bottle person on cardboard and then cut it out for them. When cutting out the face, leave a strip under the chin to allow for easy insertion and attachment to the bottle. From there the rest is up to your creative ideas. They can use the paper to create clothes, jewelry, arms, shoes, etc. You can make it a 3-D family portrait and actually make the members of your family, or make friends from school or family members they miss. They can also make up imaginary characters, or make characters to describe different feelings. They can engage in play with the characters once they are done or simply leave them as pieces of art.

### Coffee Filter Feelings



#### Materials:

Coffee Filters

Paper or Plate to Lean On

Washable Markers

Spray Bottle

Water

Scissors

Invite your child to choose a different marker to represent a different feeling. You can create a “key” on separate piece of paper if you wish so that your child will remember what means what. Have them color in the coffee filter describing how they are feeling right now or today; how much or little of each feeling do they feel? You will want to put something under the coffee filter when they are coloring as the markers will bleed through). If they create an actual design, you might want to explain to them that the design may melt away once they spray the coffee filter with water. Keeping the paper underneath the coffee filter, allow them to spray the coffee filter as much or as little as they want. More water equals more bleeding of colors. While the coffee filter is still a little wet it will stick to a window and create a stained glass like effect. You can talk about how sometimes feelings get all mixed together and it is hard to tell what is what. After the filter paper has dried, children can cut out shapes or designs from their filter, such as hearts, or flowers, representing the ability to grow from mixed-up feelings.



### **Outside/Nature Activities**

If you have a safe place to get outside, some fresh air can help push through being stuck at home. These directives include natural supplies which are usually easy to find. With any of these outside activities please be sure to take all the normal precautions while outside and wash your and your child's hands thoroughly upon going back in. They all also have an indoor option in case getting outside is not possible right now.

#### **Power Sticks**



Materials:

Sticks

Paint

Damp paper towels

Head outside, to a safe place, with the mission of collecting sticks. Wipe them down with a damp paper towel before you paint them to help the paint stick to their surface. It is entertaining enough to simply paint objects that we don't usually paint. Ask your children if they understand what it means to feel strong and powerful? Continue the conversation by asking them if they can name anything that makes them feel that way, or a time they felt that way. Then, ask them to come up with a color, or colors, that feel powerful and strong and start with those colors when they paint their sticks.

Inside alternative: paper towel rolls

## Painted Rocks



Materials:

Rocks

Paint

Paper towels

Soap and water

Go on a rock hunt and look for rocks of different shapes. Rinse them off with soap and water when you get inside to help the paint stick to the rock surface, dry them off, and paint. You can base your creation on the shape/size/color of the rock or just let your imagination turn it into whatever you want. Alternatively, you can think of a word or image that reminds you of your loved one and paint it onto the rock.

Inside alternative: cut up pieces of cardboard into rock shapes and create an “inside rock garden”

## Nature Mandala



Materials:

Any small moveable natural material you can safely find outside

The word “Mandala” is word for working within a circle. A circle is a naturally calming shape to work with and mandalas have been created for thousands of years for that reason. There are really no rules to this one other than working within a circle (and even that is subject to artistic license). Find a flat-ish space outside where you will build your design and then the rest is up to you and your child. You can collect all your supplies first and then start designing, or you can design as you go. You can use this as an opportunity to talk about patterns and incorporate them into the design, or you can completely abandon that and fill the space however you want. If it is windy day, be sure your pieces won’t blow away. If you’d like, take a photo of your finished creation, then return the materials back to nature.

Inside alternative: small toys, legos, dried beans or rice, game pieces, etc.

### **For Older Kids and Teens**

#### **Rolled Paper Beads**



Materials:

Paper

Scissors

Glue (gluestick is ideal, but any will work)

A cylindrical prop to wrap the beads around, such a toothpick or cotton swab

String

Start with long, skinny, triangle-shaped pieces of paper. You can paint/design one side of the paper before you cut it into strips, keeping in mind it will be cut up. Making the triangles from magazine pages can sometimes create some interesting designs as well. On each triangle, write

about a feeling you are experiencing, a memory, or something you would like to tell your loved one (No one will see these messages after the next step). Then, roll your triangles. Put a strip of glue down the side of the paper that will be the inside, and begin rolling it around the toothpick or cotton swab. Add some extra glue to the very end before finishing the wrap and then remove the toothpick, setting the bead aside to dry. Once you have created enough to make a piece of jewelry, you can string them together to make a bracelet or necklace.

### Altered Book



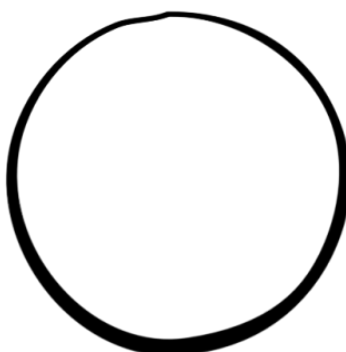
#### Materials:

An old book (with permission to destroy it)

Any art supplies you can find

An altered book is the process of taking a pre-made book and turning into a visual art journal. Often a perk of this activity is the element of feeling like you are breaking some rule by creating inside an actual book. It can be an ongoing project (people work on the same altered book for years), and the sky is the limit (if you can think of a visual art technique there is probably a way to incorporate it into your book). Choose an old book; hardcover with mostly text usually works best, but any type of book will do. Whenever you want to use paint or a material which may bleed through the page, it is smart to glue a couple pages together first. Some people work from the front to the back of the book, and some people open up to a random page every time they are going to make an entry. Some people disregard the words on the page, and some people read the page for inspiration pulling out a few words to spark their creativity. Envelopes can be added, pages can be ripped out. It can be painted, collaged, drawn in, etc. This can be a great long term project for pre-teen/teens.

## A Mandala a Day



Materials:

Paper

Drawing Material

Something circular to trace as your outline (Tupperware container, large bottle, etc.) – optional

As mentioned in the nature mandala description, “mandala” is a term for creating within a circle. There is an innately calming quality to working within that shape and it has been done for thousands of years. All you need is a piece of paper, drawing/painting materials of any kind, and if you’d like, something you can trace for your circle. This can be a one-time thing, or can become a quick daily practice. Use the inside of the circle as a place to create something that reflects how you are feeling in that moment. Stay inside the circle, or create on both sides of it. This can easily become a ritual upon waking, after lunch, or before bed as an emotional check-in.