



NJ GRIEF COLLABORATIVE GRIEF CURRICULUM

A MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH RESOURCE FOR SCHOOLS

NJ's Grief Collaborative Curriculum is a two-lesson educational program designed to be easily integrated into middle and high school classes after completion of required staff professional development. Built to meet the growing need for **social-emotional learning and mental wellness support**, this curriculum equips students with the tools to understand and navigate grief in a healthy, developmentally appropriate way.

TWO ENGAGING LESSONS

Lesson 1: Understanding Loss and Grief

Students learn to define **loss** (death and non-death related) and identify **secondary losses** (changes in routine, relationships, or identity) that often follow. This builds a foundation for recognizing the layered impact of grief.

Additionally, students explore the various ways **grief** can **impact overall wellbeing** — emotionally, physically, mentally, behaviorally, spiritually, and relationally. This lesson also addresses **common grief misconceptions**, such as the belief that “you ‘get over’ grief,” helping students normalize their grief experience.

Lesson 2: Understanding Healthy Coping

Students will learn about unhealthy and healthy forms of **coping** and ways of mourning their losses. Students will also learn how using an **internal locus of control** can empower them to make decisions that promote **healthy integration** of loss.

UTILIZING A STORY DRIVEN APPROACH

Throughout the curriculum, students meet **two relatable young people** who have experienced a loss due to death at different points in their lives. Students are asked to consider the various ways grief impacts their lives while exploring different avenues of support. This promotes **critical thinking, empathy, and emotional awareness**.

METHODS OF CURRICULUM DELIVERY

Outsource:

NJ Grief Collaborative team will deliver curriculum to students

In-house:

Designated teachers will receive PD and deliver curriculum to students

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- **Two hours of in-person professional development for educators** before implementation, ensuring confidence and grief-informed teaching approach.
- **A letter to parents/caregivers** explaining the purpose and scope of the lessons.
- **Ready-to-use classroom materials** which include slide deck, curriculum script, student handouts, case scenarios, and reflection prompts.
- **Resources for families who are grieving**, including information on community grief support centers and online grief and mental health organizations.

WHY SCHOOLS CHOOSE OUR GRIEF CURRICULUM

- **Meets health mandate and SEL standards**
- Enhances emotional literacy and peer support
- Reduces stigma around grief and mental health
- Easy to implement with minimal prep time
- Builds a more connected, compassionate school culture

Support your students where it matters most—emotionally.

NJ Grief Collaborative's Grief Curriculum is more than a lesson plan

—
it's a proactive tool to help students navigate life's hardest moments with resilience, self-awareness, and empathy.

PREPARED BY:



To bring our Grief Curriculum to your school:

Contact Us!
info@njgriefcollaborative

Visit our Website!
njgriefcollaborative.org

Lesson One: Understanding Loss and Grief Overview

At A Glance

1. Loss
 - Death and non-death related
2. Secondary Loss
 - Immediate
 - Future
3. Grief
 - The mental, emotional, physical, behavioral, relational, and spiritual impact of grief
 - Common misconceptions about grief

Learning Goals

1. Recognize that loss is an inevitable part of life, can come in various forms, and can produce a ripple effect of additional losses.
2. Identify grief as a natural, normal response to any type of loss and recognize the impact it can have on us.
3. Discover how common grief beliefs can influence how we support others and support ourselves.

Key Terms

Loss

The absence of someone or something

Secondary Losses

Additional losses/changes that can occur either immediately after an initial loss or in the future

Grief

The natural and normal feelings and thoughts we can experience following any type of loss

Secondary Losses are _____ losses/changes that can occur either _____ after an initial loss or in the _____.



Examples to illustrate secondary losses:

Initial loss: Sports injury

Potential Secondary Losses:

- Loss of being able to play for the rest of the season or longer
- Loss of being part of the team
- Loss of college scholarship
- Loss of going to the college you wanted
- Loss of ability to use the impacted body part

Initial loss: Divorce

Potential Secondary Losses:

- Loss of routine/normalcy
- Loss of home base
- Loss of family traditions
- Loss of contact with parent (if one moves/remarries)
- Loss of previous connections with parents/other family members

These secondary losses can be just as impactful as the initial loss experienced.



LOSS

Loss is a natural, inevitable part of our lives and can be defined as the absence of someone or something.

Examples can include: death of a family member (including pets), friend, or other person.



DISCUSSION QUESTION 1

What are examples of losses that are non-death related that we may experience throughout our lives?

What are examples of losses that are non-death related that we may experience throughout our lives?

divorce

separation

moving to a new home

illness

injury

incarceration

change of home or caregiver

foster care

addiction

abandonment

deployment

changes in friendship

graduation

loss of caregiver's presence due to work

romantic relationships

sports injury

personal item

loss in sports/video games/etc.