



## Tips for Providers: Helping Children and Youth Cope with Collective Grief

**Collective grief** happens when a society or community all experience extreme change or loss. This often develops after mass casualties, large events, or rampant tragedies. Similar to individual grief, we may feel a lack of control as we may feel paralyzed, powerless, or unable to prevent the loss or change.

We may also feel what is known as anticipatory grief as a crisis continues.

**Anticipatory grief** is that feeling we get when we are mourning and grieving before something actually happens. The loss around us is noticeable and we see that the problems have not been fixed, so we fear more may be happening soon. More anger and emotional intensity along with anxiety and fear and mental rehearsals of the expected death or change may occur.

All of this can feel overwhelming.

**Cumulative grief** occurs when there isn't time between losses to grieve the previous loss. It can be characterized by overwhelming and conflicting feelings or profound numbness. The healing process for collective grief doesn't always look the same as for individual grief as it can feel bigger and broader.

Grief is not linear and we all have different responses, what we may need most now is connection.

### What can you do?

As a provider, you can make space for young people and their caregivers to share their fears, concerns, and experiences. You can help caregivers and young people to understand collective grief as well as anticipatory and cumulative grief.



## Tips for Providers: Helping Children and Youth Cope with Collective Grief

### **Other practices to consider as shared by our CTAC Clinical Team:**

**Check in with children and youth:** Assume children and youth have thoughts and feelings about what happened. Check in with them and open the conversation.

**Listen:** Ask open ended questions and ask about what they're feeling and thinking. Listening can be supportive.

**Correct misinformation:** If there is inaccurate information, correct it in a gentle way.

**Reassure:** Let children and youth know that you and their school are focused on keeping them safe right now.

**Provide opportunities for action:** Help to write letters or offer support to those who have been most affected.

**Get more support:** If after a few weeks, children or youth have nightmares or other challenges, consider using interventions or getting more support for the entire family.

### **Other CTAC Offerings to consider:**

Childhood Grief and Loss in the Time of COVID-19: A Guide for Caregivers. (2000).CTAC. <https://www.ctacny.org/trainings/childhood-grief-and-loss-in-the-time-of-covid-19-a-guide-for-caregivers/>



### **Resources:**

Haragutchi, Hart (2022, April 13). Grief in transition aged youth. CTAC. <https://www.ctacny.org/trainings/grief-in-transition-aged-youth/>

Rehman, Asma (2022).What is collective grief? *Grief Recovery Center*. <https://www.griefrecoveryhouston.com/what-is-collective-grief>

Wolfelt, A. (2013). *Helping children cope with grief*. Routledge.

Worden, J. W. (2018). *Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner*. Springer Publishing Company.