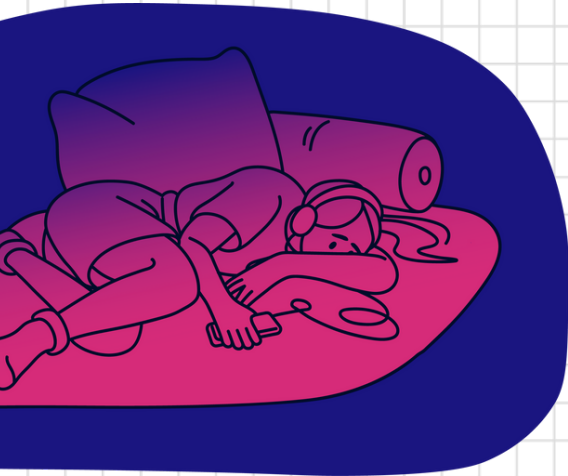


Supporting Youth Who Are

# EXPERIENCING GRIEF



## WHAT IS GRIEF?

Grief can be thought of as the range of feelings we have after a significant loss, including the death of a loved one.<sup>1</sup> While it often takes a great deal of energy to adjust to a world without that person, grief is a natural process and a reflection of the love we had for the person who died.

- **Adaptive** grieving helps youth to feel and cope better after a death.
- **Maladaptive** grieving keeps youth “stuck” and unable to adjust.

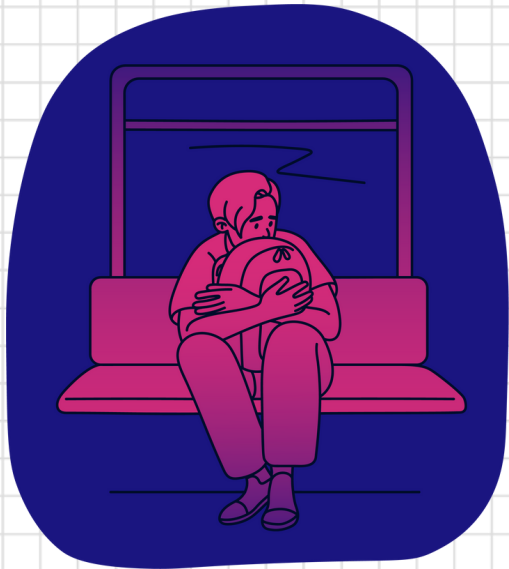
## UNDERSTANDING GRIEF IN JUVENILE JUSTICE SETTINGS

1. The exposure to multiple traumas and losses increases the risk of a youth entering the juvenile justice system.
2. The majority of youth in juvenile justice settings have experienced loss, and often these losses are under traumatic circumstances, such as homicide.
3. Grief can be associated with behaviors that may get youth in trouble, but it may just be their way of coping with the death of a significant person.
4. Once in the system, a youth’s grief reactions may be lumped in under the umbrella of trauma, which may cause staff and other adults to ignore or not recognize distressing grief reactions.

**75%**

of youth in juvenile  
justice settings  
have experienced  
the death of a close  
loved one

## WHAT WE CAN DO



Researchers find that youth in juvenile justice settings are rarely asked about the death of their loved one or even grief in general. We can start supporting youth by acknowledging their grief, and recognize that we all grieve in different ways.

Specifically for juvenile justice staff, trauma-informed care must also be accompanied with grief support and recognizing the youth's experience of losing a loved one.

## MULTIDIMENSIONAL GRIEF THERAPY (MGT)

Multidimensional Grief Therapy (MGT)<sup>2</sup> is designed to reduce maladaptive grieving, promote adaptive grieving, and help bereaved youth (aged 7 to 18) lead healthy, happy, productive lives.

**Phase 1:** Any caring adult can administer phase one, which is designed to provide general grief support by introducing the basics of coping with grief. Some youth may only need phase one.

**Phase 2:** Generally, a trained clinician conducts phase two, which is designed for youth who are stuck in their grief or who are really struggling. This phase helps with identifying and replacing maladaptive thoughts such as "it was all my fault" or "I'm never going to be happy again."

### Sources:

1. American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Grief. In APA dictionary of psychology. Retrieved April 12, 2024, from <https://dictionary.apa.org/grief>
2. Kaplow, J. B., Layne, C. M., Pynoos, R. S., & Saltzman, W. (2023). *Multidimensional Grief Therapy: A Flexible Approach to Assessing and Supporting Bereaved Youth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Contact CTRJJ to  
learn more about  
grief and MGT

