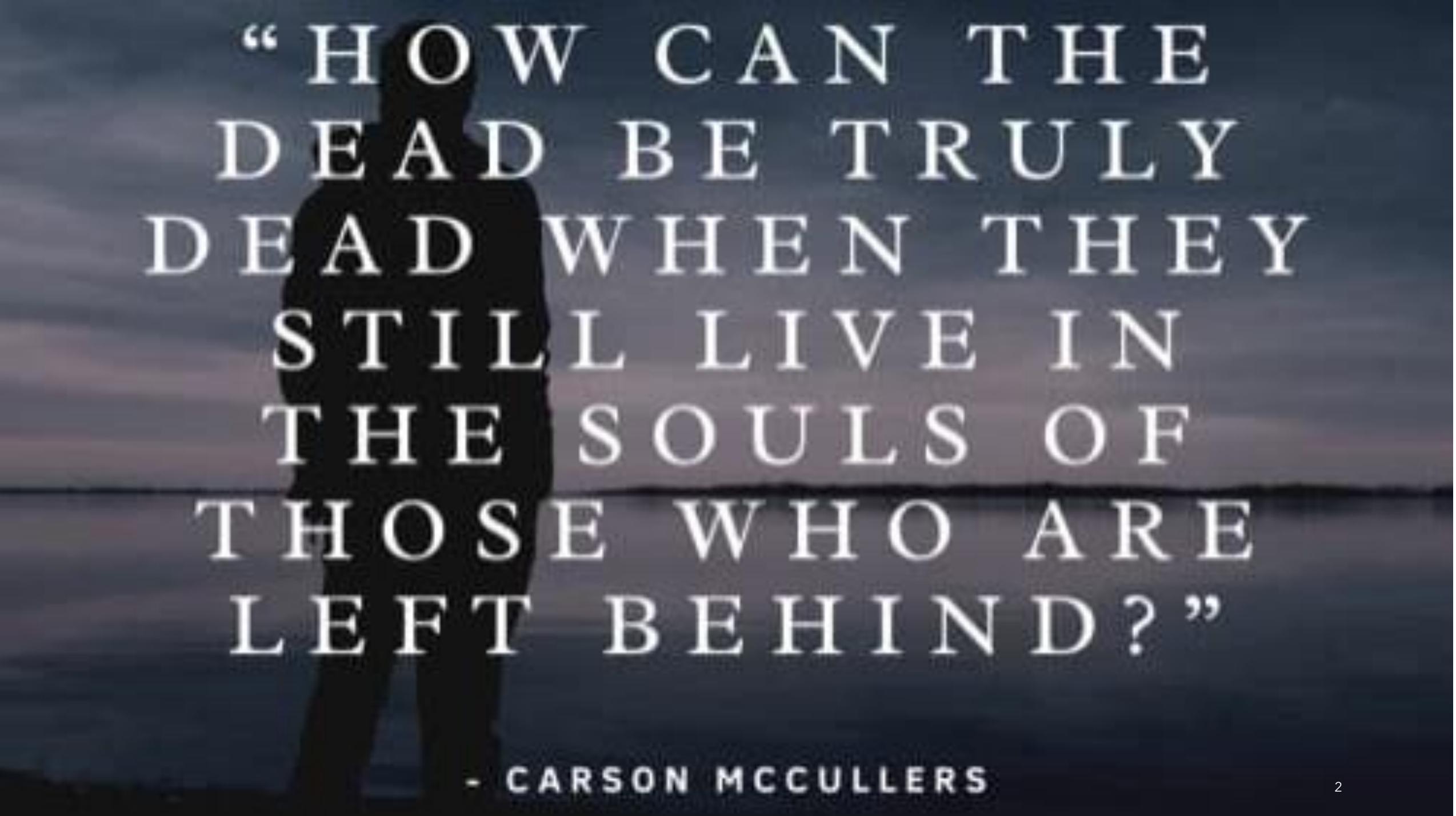


How To Talk To Your Children About Grief

Ms. S. McPherson-Berg

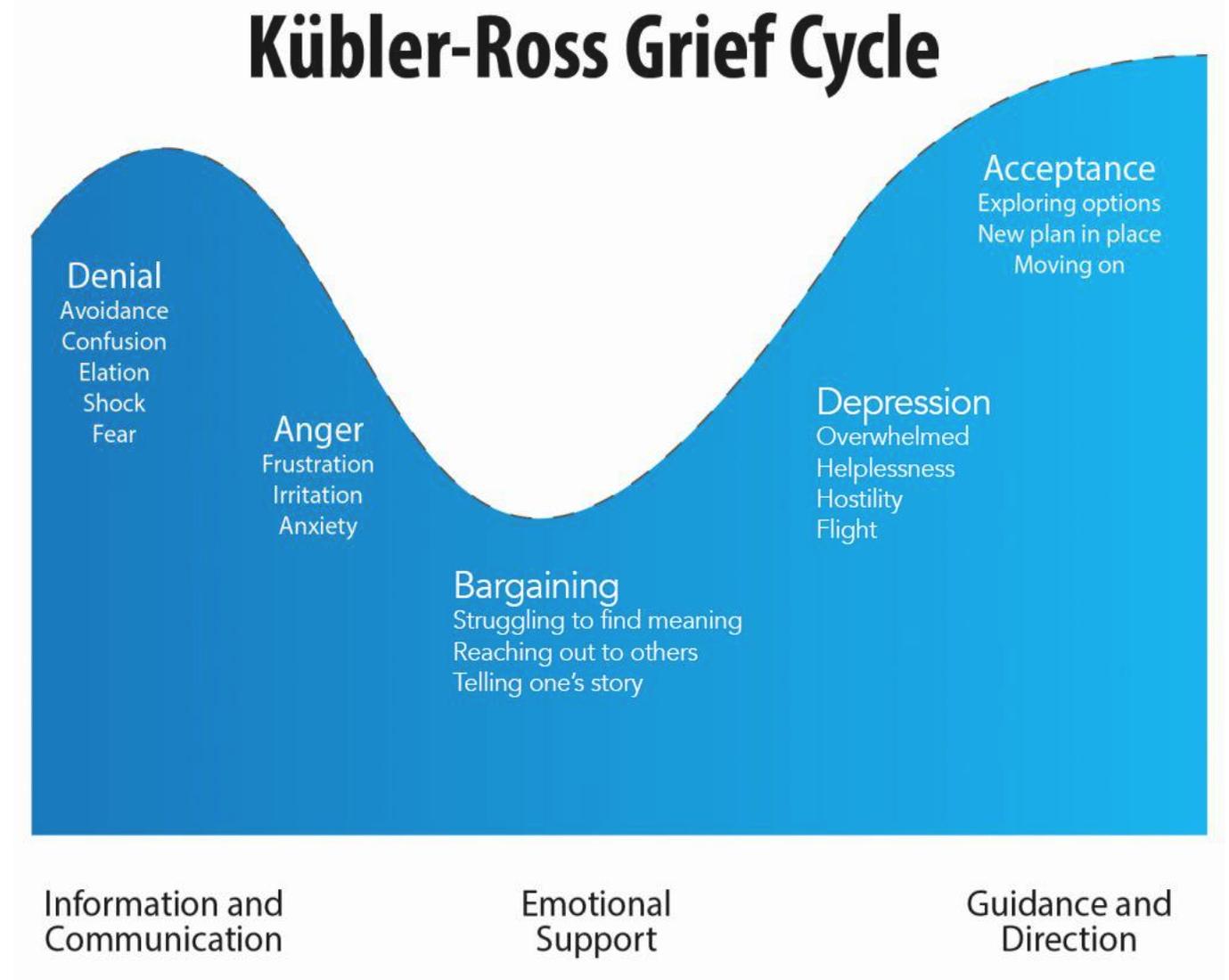
A silhouette of a person stands on a beach, looking out at the ocean under a soft, hazy sky. The person is positioned on the left side of the frame, with their back to the camera. The ocean stretches across the horizon, and the sky is a mix of light and dark tones, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

“HOW CAN THE
DEAD BE TRULY
DEAD WHEN THEY
STILL LIVE IN
THE SOULS OF
THOSE WHO ARE
LEFT BEHIND?”

- CARSON MCCOLLERS

Five Stages of Grief:

- The order of each stage depends on the child who is grieving. The child may go to one stage and go back and forth between stages often.



Denial:

Avoidance

Confusion

Elation

Shock

Fear

- This takes place because your life as you knew it has changed. You may wish that what you know did not happen. It is a defense mechanism in your body.

Anger:

Feelings:



Frustration



Irritation



Anxiety

Responses/Thoughts

- This is another response to the death of a loved one
- You may think that life is not fair
- You may feel vulnerable
- You may feel like your life is out of control
- Your child may have some of the same feelings at the same or a different time

Bargaining:

(May or may not take place)



Struggling to find meaning



Reaching out to others



Telling one's story

- You may want to get your life back
- You may want a miracle to take place to bring your loved one back to life
- You may want to make a deal to change the loss that you are experiencing

Depression:

You may feel:

- Overwhelmed
- Helpless
- Hostile
- The need for flight; like you want to leave the situation
- You may withdraw from life
- You may feel numb
- You may feel like you are in a fog
- You may not want to be around others
- You may have feelings of hopelessness



Acceptance:



Exploring
options



New plan in
place



Moving
forward

- You learn to live with the loss of your loved one
- You have a new reality that your loved one is not coming back
- You start to see friends again
- You have more good days than bad days

What helps?



Tell your child the truth:

It minimizes confusion:

Children who are not told the truth often fill in the blanks themselves

They may think that they somehow caused the death

It is better to hear it from a trusted adult rather than social media or gossip

Recognizing the symptoms of grief:

Crying

Headaches

Difficulty
Sleeping

Questioning
the purpose of
life

Symptoms of grief:



Questioning your spiritual beliefs



Having feelings of detachment



Loss of Appetite

Symptoms of grief:

Frustration

Guilt

Fatigue

Anger

Stress

Aches /Pains

Listening:



Take the time to listen to what your child says



Notice their body language/what is not being said



Respond in language that s/he can understand

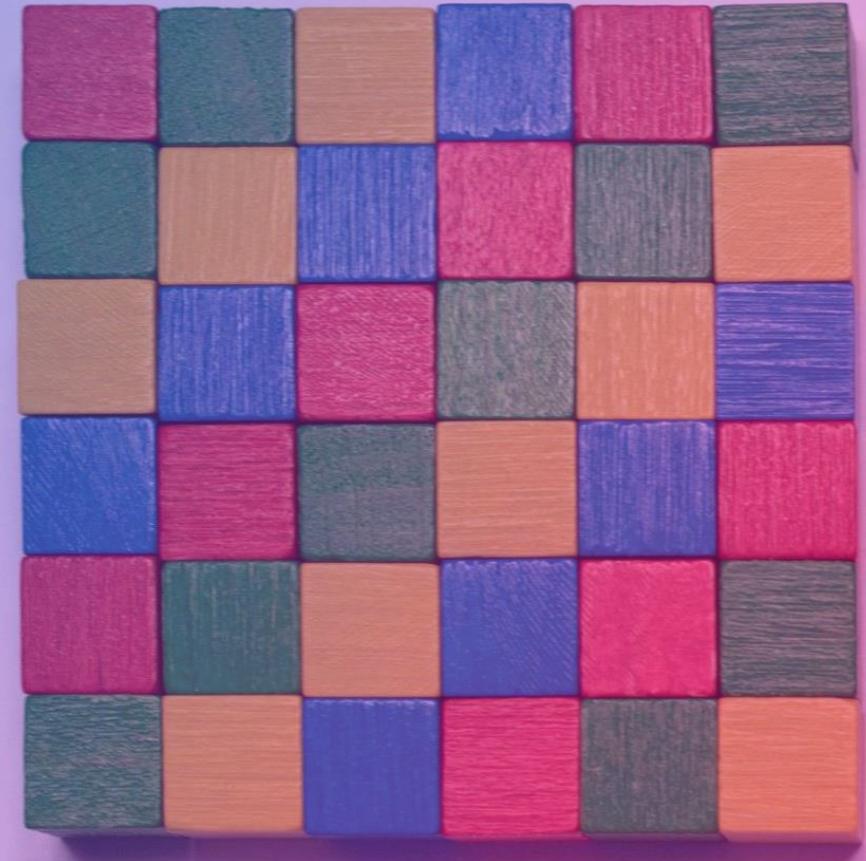
- Example:
- “You get really upset when your friends mention...”
- Talking about it will help you get the feelings out”

Choices You may want to offer:

- “Do you want cold cereal or hot cereal today?”
- “What type of fruit do you want to buy?”
- “What game would you like to play during family game night?”

Spaces for play and creativity:

- Give your child time to:
- Play
- Draw
- Color
- Write in a journal
- Build with blocks/Legos



Routines and Consistency:

Try your best:

- Keep your routines surrounding:
 - Breakfast
 - Getting to school
 - After-school activities
 - Bedtime (they may need extra time/care)

Developing a way to remember the person who died:

- Let your child lead you:
 - Your child may have an idea of how s/he wants to remember the person who died
 - Your child may need some suggestions:
 - writing
 - drawing
 - planting seeds, a bush, a tree etc.

Take a break:

Coping skill:

Do activities that bring you joy

Find new activities that relax you

Find activities where you and your child can bond

Find activities where your child can develop a new skill

Funerals, memorials, celebrations of life:

- Your child may wish to:
 - Be included in selecting items for the funeral
 - The clothing of your loved one
 - They may wish to plant a tree, seeds, or a bush to commemorate their loved one

Support at school:



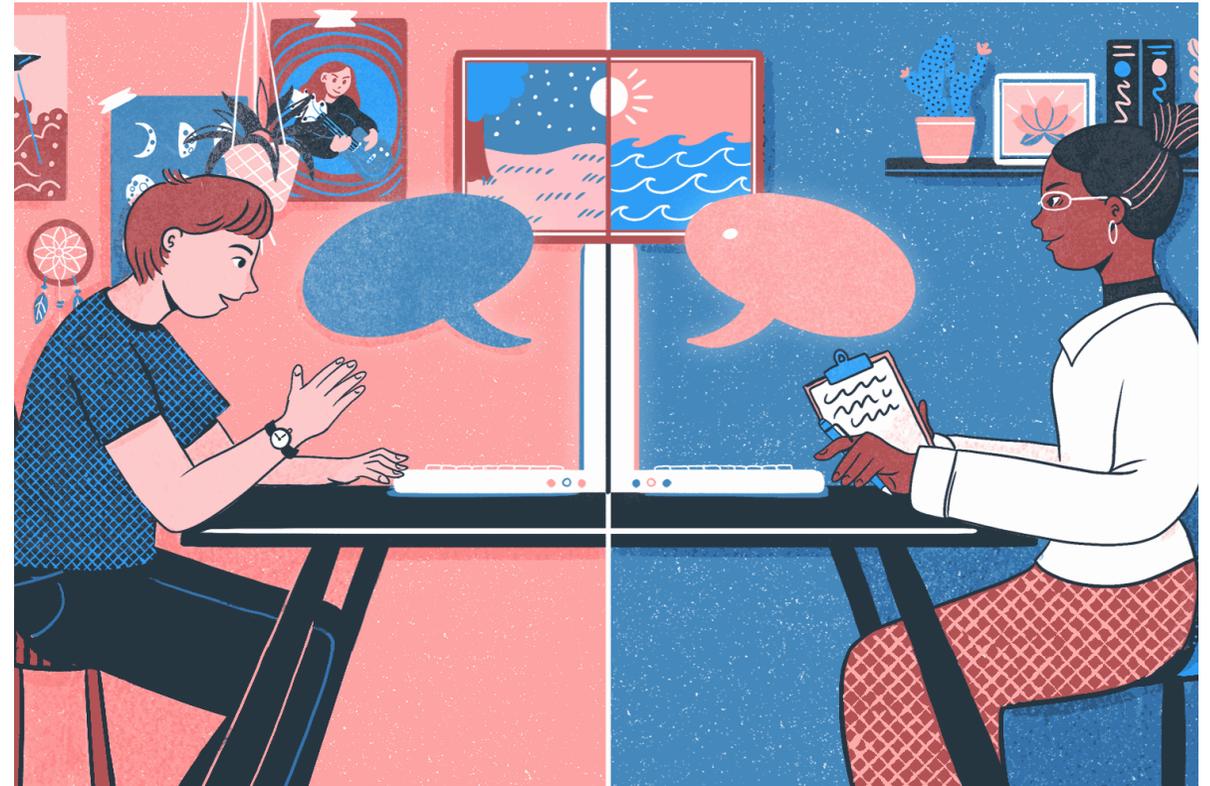
- Remember:
 - The school has counselors, deans, psychologists, social workers to speak with your child
 - The Family Center is available to have counselors speak with your child

Address the stigma:

- You can say:
 - This is uncomfortable for most people to talk about, but we can get through this tough time together

Get assistance if needed:

- Consider reaching out to a:
- Counselor/Guidance Counselor
- Psychologist
- Social Worker
- Even if you have not tried this before



Ask for referrals:

Copies are available here at the presentation

Answer questions honestly:

- Children learn through asking questions
- It shows that they are curious about things they don't understand
- Tell them that it's okay to ask questions
- Tell them the truth about how the person dies (use age- appropriate language for your child)
- Use the word “died” and not other terms

Give children choices:

- Children appreciate choices
- Give them an opportunity to say goodbye to the person who has died
- Different ways to say goodbye:
 - Assisting with selecting the casket, clothing, flowers
 - Speaking at the service
 - Having them write something to be read at the service

If the child chooses not to attend services:

- Some children may want something that reminds them about the person who died
- Some children do not want reminders around them; speak with them about what works for them
- Remember each of your children is different
- For the child who elects not to have keepsakes from the person who died, you may want to put something aside for him or her if there is a change in the future

What to say instead:

Past:

➤ “You must be...”



▪ Present:

➤ “How is your grief today/how is it affecting you?”

➤ I appreciate all that you’ve shared with me

➤ “At least...”



➤ What has it been like for you?

What to say instead:

- Past:

- “It’s all part of a bigger plan”



- Present:

- “I am here to listen”

- “I know how you feel”



- “What has it been like for you?”

What to say instead:

Past:

“You’re strong”



■ Present:

➤ “You went back to school, how was that?”

“Don’t feel that way”



➤ “You seem like you are struggling with your feelings, I’m here if you want to share more”

What to say instead:

Past:

- “They would want you to be happy/They would be so proud of you”



Present:

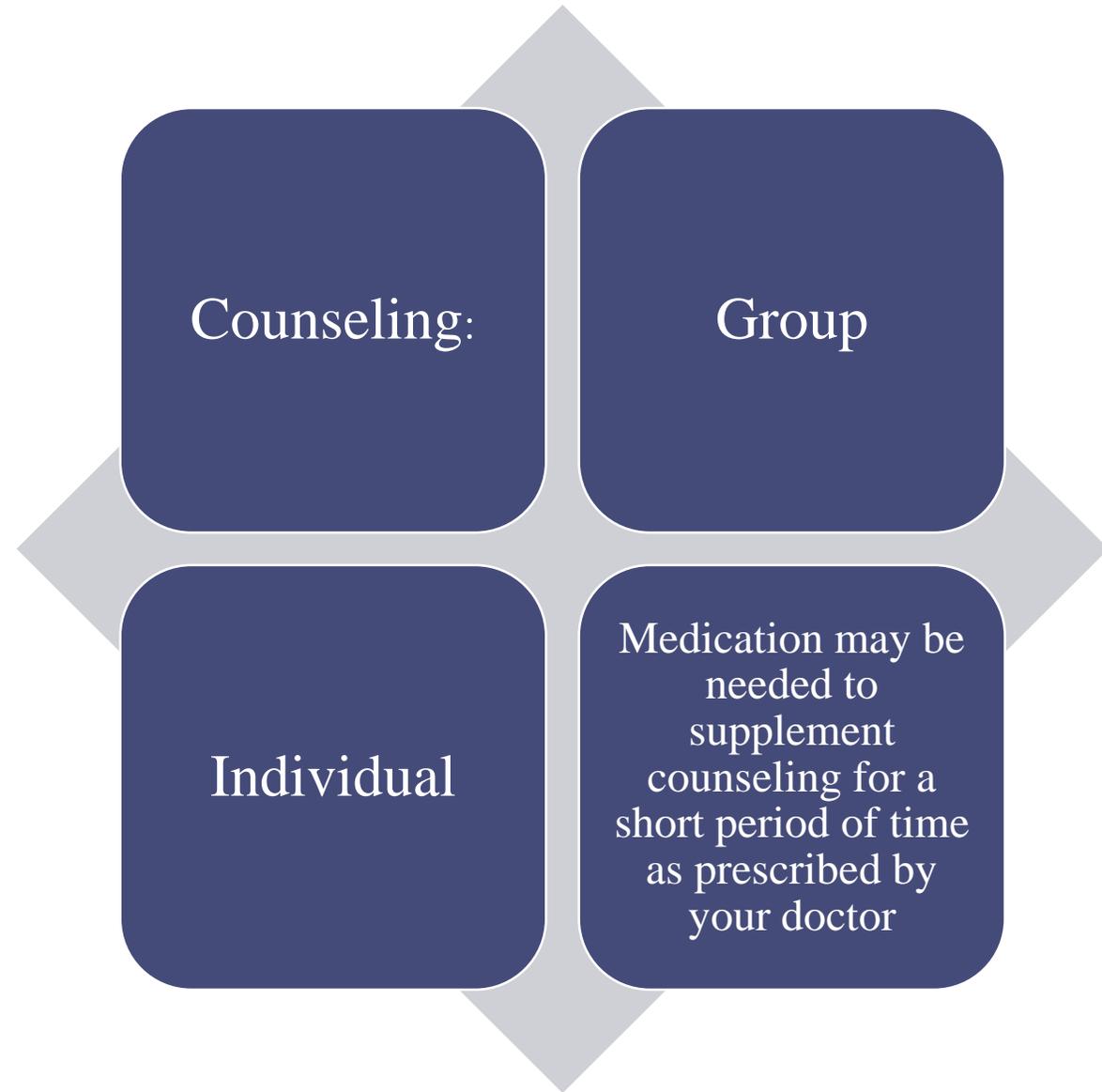
- “I’m so proud of you for -----
. What do you think -----would say if s/he were here?”

- “Let me know if there is anything I can do”



- “I’m on my way to the supermarket, can I pick up something for you? I know you like juice boxes, why don’t I grab a few packs for you.”

Treatment:



The background is split into two vertical panels. The left panel has a purple-to-pink gradient and contains several large, semi-transparent question marks. The right panel is dark grey and contains several 3D question marks that appear to be standing on a surface, casting shadows.

Questions?

thank you