

# DISCUSSION STARTERS



Even though our groups don't follow a curriculum or have a specific set of topics, there are times when it's helpful to offer an idea or question to spark discussion. The questions listed below can be used for large, small, or even individual conversations. We've split them into categories to help you pick ones that are relevant to the age range you're facilitating, but any of them can be adapted as needed for the developmental level of participants.

## ANY AGE

- What did you do for the holidays before the person died? How have the holidays changed?
- What helps with your grieving (hobbies, people, activities)?
- What is one of your favorite memories of the person who died?
- Where in your body do you feel your emotions?
- Tell us about a funny moment you shared with the person who died.
- What did you like most about the person who died? What did they do that irritated you?
- If you could tell the person who died something, what would it be?
- If your family had a memorial service/funeral/celebration of life/homegoing, what did you think of it? What would you have changed?

If you have questions about the why, when, and how of asking questions in your role as a facilitator, be sure to check out [The Why, When, and How of Asking Questions Facilitator Tip Sheet](#).

- What future events do you imagine will be difficult without your person there? Will any be easier?
- When you meet new people who don't know that your person died, what's it like for you?
- What do you worry about? Which of your worries are new since the person died?
- What do you remember about the last time you saw/talked to your person?
- What dreams have you had about the person? How do they affect you?
- How have you changed since the person died?
- Which songs/tv shows/movies remind you of the person?
- How has your family changed since the death?
- What parts of grief are surprising/frustrating/most difficult?
- What kind of (parent/sibling/child/spouse/partner/friend) was your ...?
- What's something they did or said that annoyed you?
- What do you miss the most/least about the person?
- What keeps you going on the toughest days?



# Facilitator Tips: **DISCUSSION STARTERS**

## **CHILDREN**

- What does grief feel like and where do you feel it in your body?
- How are you like and not like your person?
- Tell us about a favorite photo of the person.
- Who told you that your person died? What did they say?
- What's the scariest part of grief?
- What questions do you have about your person or about how they died?
- What did your person look like? What kinds of clothes did they wear?

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL & TEENS**

- What's the weirdest thing about grief?
- What was it like going back to school after the person died?
- Who can you talk to about your person and/or your grief?
- How have things changed with other people in your family?
- What are the things people say that are helpful/ really bug you?
- How have your friends responded? What do you wish they would do?
- How has the death affected your future plans?
- How has having someone die shaped your values?
- How does grief feel compared to what you thought it would feel like?

## **ADULTS**

- How do you balance being there for your children with making time for your own grief?
- Who handled the business side of grief in your family? If it was you, what was that like?
- How has your day to day life changed?
- How have things changed/stayed the same with your extended family?
- Who can you turn to for support?
- If you're a parent, what kind of parent are you vs. what kind of parent was the person who died? Have you had to learn a different way of parenting?
- How did you tell the children you care for about the death?
- What's the biggest question you have in this moment about grief and/or life without your person?
- What else did you lose when the person died?
- What are you angry about? What do you do with that anger?

This list is definitely not exhaustive, so if you have a conversation starter you'd like to try, bring it to your next pre-meeting to discuss with your Coordinator and fellow volunteers. Thank you for all that you do to create safe, accepting, and meaningful conversations for grieving children and families!



**The Dougy Center**  
*The National Center for Grieving Children & Families*

### **Our Mission**

The Dougy Center provides support in a safe place where children, teens, young adults, and their families grieving a death can share their experiences. Our Pathways program provides support for families facing an advanced serious illness.

### **The Dougy Center Bookstore/Resources**

The Dougy Center has been helping children, teens, young adults and their parents cope with death since 1982. Our practical, easy-to-use materials are based on what we have learned from more than 45,000 Dougy Center participants. To order online, visit [dougy.org](http://dougy.org) or [tdcbookstore.org](http://tdcbookstore.org), or call 503.775.5683.