



Dear grieving family,

We are so sorry to hear of the loss of your loved one, and our hearts are deeply saddened knowing that you are experiencing the heartbreak of losing someone you love. The G.A.P. Network wants to offer our deepest sympathy. As people who have suffered the loss of a family member or loved one in any capacity, we wish to comfort and support you and your family.

This letter is to let you know that you are not alone. We know that family members often feel they are completely alone in their grief, and the stigma surrounding addiction or experiencing a mental health related death can add another layer of emotions such as guilt, judgment, and anger to the already difficult grieving process. Many families feel overwhelmed trying to find answers as to how this happened to their loved one. We are here to provide community support and educational resources to help you begin to navigate through your grief. We are part of an organization called the G.A.P. Network, which stands for Grief. Advocacy. Prevention. Our community is made up of individuals, family groups, and organizations who provide a voice for the thousands of Ohio individuals and families who have lost a loved one due to substance use, incarceration, death by suicide, domestic violence or who are experiencing any type of stigmatized grief.

We hope that this packet of information can provide you with some valuable resources to help you cope and lead to a deeper understanding of grief and loss. The last page of this packets contains an extensive list of support groups, counseling offerings, as well as information on grief. Most importantly, we want you to know that we are here to offer support through providing counseling resources, peer-support groups, and education. Our phone number and email are listed below. We invite you to reach out to us if you wish to talk, so we can provide you with some tools to begin to work through your grief. We have walked in your path and know all too well the heartbreak of losing a loved one.

With Our Deepest Sympathy,

The G.A.P. Network

Prevention Action Alliance
gap@preventionactionalliance.org
614.540.9985



The G.A.P. Network

What is the G.A.P. Network?

Grief. Advocacy. Prevention.



Supporting individuals;
providing a voice for families;
mobilizing communities.
Bridging the gap.

The G.A.P. Network was formed in response to a public outcry against prescription medication abuse and the heroin epidemic. As of now, the G.A.P. Network is expanding to integrate all forms of grief and loss. Members are engagement groups, advocacy groups, families, individuals, and organizations which provide a voice for Ohioans impacted by substance abuse, suicide, domestic violence, incarceration, opiate overdose and any other traumatic loss or mental health circumstance. The G.A.P. Network provides technical assistance, emotional support, resources, education, advocacy, and networking opportunities to support you and your local efforts.

Losing a loved one is an incomparable loss. Grief is complex, and it can take time before you're ready to advocate.

Too many people have experienced traumatic loss and stigmatized grief. The G.A.P. Network is here to encourage healing, support your grieving, and advocate through prevention.

Our Mission

"To provide support to families impacted by unexpected loss and take action to create community change." The G.A.P. Network provides support for those coping with active addictions, coping with grief and loss, and those looking for general support during a tough transitional time in life. These groups play a critical role in changing policies through advocacy.

Our Approach

The G.A.P. Network offers training, grant opportunities as well as technical and emotional support. We can provide information, education, and resources to help support you through your grief or your local prevention efforts. Prevention is effective, and we can help you make changes in your community.

Advocacy is Action

Advocacy helps sway public opinion, bolster community support and create change. Every advocacy group faces a set of unique challenges within its own community. That's why the G.A.P. Network provides local and regional support, training, resources, networking opportunities and advocacy guidance.

Prevention
Action Alliance

Lifetime Prevention | Lifetime Wellness



Contact Us:
6171 Huntley Road, Suite G
Columbus, OH 43229
preventionactionalliance.org
614.540.9985

Grief. Advocacy. Prevention.

Grief and Loss

Grief is a normal, natural reaction to loss. It is an emotional response usually caused by an ending or change of something. The experience of grief is different for each of us. It is personal. Grief often involves a variety of emotions including anger, sadness, fear, loneliness, guilt, regret, depression, emptiness, confusion, anxiety, and despair. It is not uncommon to experience a mixture of these and other emotions. You may feel like you are on a roller coaster. Your emotions can quickly change from one moment to the next. The challenge is to accept our emotions and give ourselves permission to feel whatever emotions arise. Accept that this is part of the grieving process. Don't judge yourself or anyone else for how they feel. Try to share your feelings; it's good to talk about them. Grief is painful, but we cannot avoid it. We can't go over, under or around it. The only way is directly through it.

Many turn to short-term fixes: alcohol, drugs, overeating, sleeping, shopping, hoarding, etc. These only tend to interfere with the healthy resolution of grief and may become another problem. Grief takes time. Many experts have proposed that there is a predictable progression through stages of grief. The most recognized of these is that of Elizabeth Kubler Ross. She proposed that we move through five stages: denial, anger, depression, bargaining and acceptance. No one moves through these in some orderly fashion, finishing one and moving to the next. Instead, we may go back and forth, repeating one or more stage before we move on.

Feelings of loss are personal, and only you know what is significant to you. Dealing with a significant loss can be one of the most difficult times in a person's life. The length of the grief process is different for everyone, and there is no schedule for grief. Although it can be quite painful at times, the grief process should not be rushed. It is important to be patient with yourself as you experience your unique reactions to the loss. With time and support, things generally do get better. However, it is normal for significant dates, holidays, or other reminders to trigger feelings related to the loss. Taking care of yourself, seeking support, and acknowledging your feelings during these times are ways that can help you cope.

Common Grief Reactions:

- Feeling empty and numb, as if you are in a state of shock
- Physical responses such as nausea, trouble breathing, crying, confusion, lack of energy, dry mouth, or changes in sleeping and eating patterns
- Anger at a situation, a person or in general
- Guilt about what you did or did not do
- Withdrawal from family, friends, and common activities
- Difficulty focusing, working, or making decisions
- Questions about faith or spirituality

Coping With Grief

As you grieve, it is helpful to find activities that help you heal. Each one of us has an individual style of coping with painful experiences. The following suggestions may help you manage your feelings of grief:

- Share your thoughts, feelings, and memories with others. Find those that are comfortable listening to you talk about it and let them know how it helps you. Consider writing in a journal if you are not ready to talk.
- Accept support. Let your family and friends know what you need and what you find helpful.
- Get physical exercise. It can help you sleep better, lower your risk of depression, and boost your immune system
- Eat healthy, good foods.
- Use religion, philosophy, poetry, music, art, gardening, and walks in nature to gain relief and understanding. All religions recognize that grievers need special help, even if you have not been attending regularly. You won't be turned away.
- Have a little fun. Recognize that laughter doesn't mean you are being disrespectful.
- Don't underestimate the effects of small pleasures.
- Postpone major decisions, such as selling your home or changing jobs.
- Allow time to grieve. Be patient with yourself. Read about grief so that you can see what you are feeling is normal.
- Resist the temptation to use alcohol or drugs to numb your pain. These can interfere with the grieving process by delaying it or covering it up.
- Know that seeking professional help doesn't mean you are weak, inadequate, or crazy.
- Consider getting professional help if you feel overwhelmed, hopeless, or helpless.
- Respect the individual grieving timetable and method of grieving.
- Prepare for the holidays and anniversaries. Even when you have moved forward in your grief, these dates may bring back some painful feelings. Make plans to be with friends and family members with whom you feel comfortable. This is also the perfect time to check in with other family members about how they're doing with their grief and share mutual support.

Dealing with Survivor Guilt

When a loved one dies, guilt can be very common, as there may be a tendency to blame ourselves for something we did or didn't do that may have contributed to the death. This is common. Guilt is a strong emotion. Symptoms of survivor guilt are often similar to those of anxiety and depression. They may be experienced as mild or severe and can include the following:

- Nightmares
- Sleeplessness
- Loss of motivation
- Flashbacks
- Reduction in or disinterest in self-care
- Increase in irritability or agitation

If you are worried about any of the feelings or reactions you are having, it is a good idea to talk to a person who is close to you or a professional. The most important thing to remember is that grief is a process, and it takes time.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is an essential tool in our efforts to move forward in our grieving process. Forgiveness is a process of releasing ourselves from a painful burden. Forgiveness is a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward another who has harmed you. It can bring peace of mind and frees you from corrosive anger. Forgiveness involves letting go of deeply held negative feelings. It allows us to recognize our pain without letting that pain define us. According to research, forgiveness:

- Makes us happier
- Sustains relationship
- Helps resolve conflict
- Boosts kindness and connectedness
- Helps us heal

Grieving and Advocacy

Only through self-care, can we then help others. Self-care, grieving and coping responsibly are of the utmost importance throughout life. The urge to quickly become a public advocate must be harnessed with respect to the emotions we feel in times of loss. Understanding and respecting our grief by seeking help is perfectly acceptable and encouraged. The G.A.P. Network has resources available through our website, where you can find a multitude of resources related to grief and loss. The revamping of the G.A.P. Network has allowed for growth and understanding that grief and loss is not exclusive but inclusive to all. The G.A.P. Network aims to serve those dealing with any grief or loss, whether it be traumatic loss, anticipatory loss, death by suicide, death due to overdose, incarceration, domestic violence, opiate abuse, and any other form of loss due related to mental health.

Advocacy

Once the necessary time is spent respecting our grief, we then can be effective advocates. Action is advocacy. It's a challenging task, and at times uncomfortable, but it's a necessary one. The

G.A.P. Network provides local support, training, resources, networking opportunities, and guidance to empower advocacy efforts. To learn more about advocacy opportunities or trainings, visit our website listed below.

Prevention

In our battle to fight substance misuse, and the promotion of healthy mental health and wellness, we must understand the effectiveness of prevention programs and strategies in our communities. It's up to us to educate our communities and public officials on the social and economic benefits that evidence-based prevention can offer. The G.A.P. Network seeks to educate communities and policy makers on and promote the use of effective prevention efforts throughout Ohio.

The G.A.P. Network Website

To learn about advocacy opportunities, stay up to date with government policies, substance use prevention, inspirations for healing and coping, learn about funding and training opportunities and connect with others who have similar experiences, visit our website to sign-up for our newsletter. <https://preventionactionalliance.org/connect/the-gap-network-2/>

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G.A.P. Resource List

Grief and Loss:

- 1) <https://whatsyourgrief.com/>: Excellent web page for general grief with hundreds of links on grief
- 2) <https://losscs.org/> : This community resources contains a wealth of resources that can help families and individuals find peer support and participant in remembrance events
- 3) <https://www.mastersincounseling.org/guide/loss-grief-bereavement/>: This link will take you to 115 helpful websites on grief and bereavement.
- 4) <https://www.fernside.org/grief-resources/booklists-referrals> : Resources for grieving children, young adults and adults
- 5) <http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/10-helpful-tips-talking-children-drug-related-death-loved-one/> : Tips on discussing overdose with children
- 6) <https://save.org/find-help/coping-with-loss/>
- 7) <https://cap4kids.org/columbus/behavior-counseling-addiction/grief-support/> : Grief support for children
- 8) <https://school.whatsyourgrief.com/p/the-grief-of-non-death-losses> : This webinar educates participates on non-death losses and grief related to it.
- 9) <https://school.whatsyourgrief.com/p/all-courses> : This site offers a wide variety of self-guided online courses related grief, coping and loss.

Support Groups:

- 1) <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TAPUnited> : The Addict's Parents United Closed FB Group (for Parents and loved ones that have a child or family member with the disease of addiction)
- 2) www.griefshare.org : - Offers on-line support and option for free daily encouragement email for a year. This is a worldwide organization offering a 12-week program in small group settings for grief. It has a spiritual basis but is not sponsored by any one church. All are welcome whether they are active with their faith or not. The website directs people to plug in their zip code to find a group close to them. Columbus has several groups at any given time meeting at various churches
- 3) <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/> : Haven for families who have experienced the loss of child, at any age or gestation and from any cause of death
- 4) <https://www.ohiohealth.com/patients-and-visitors/support/grief-support-groups>: -support groups for all ages, one on one counseling, workshops, art therapy, information and referral services.
- 5) <https://cornerstoneofhope.org/support-groups> - Cornerstone of Hope offers grief support groups in 8 or 10-week sessions rotated several times throughout the year. Groups are open and accessible to all, regardless of ethnic, cultural and faith backgrounds
- 6) <https://www.syntero.org/programs/for-grief-loss-trauma/> -Through group programs and individual counseling, Syntero helps people of all ages deal with grief, loss and trauma.
- 7) <https://www.facebook.com/GriefSpeaksOut> : Grief Speaks Out Facebook group
- 8) <https://www.hospiceofcentralohio.org/grief-healing/> : Support groups and group events for people experiencing grief and loss

Counseling Services:

- 1) <https://mhaohio.org/get-help/pro-bono-counseling/>: This resource links volunteers mental health professionals to those who need counseling service but cannot afford counseling.
- 2) <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/ohio?category=grief> - List of grief therapist in Ohio- cams each by city, zip code or name
- 3) <https://www.theravive.com/region/oh/grief-counseling> : Licensed therapist, on-line and in-person by county in the state of Ohio.

Prevention and Advocacy Education and Opportunities:

- 1) <http://www.drugfree.org> - Partnership for Drug Free Kids is a good addiction resource and includes a link for a memorial page for your loved one.
- 2) <https://www.ohiocip.org/> - The Ohio CIP Initiative aims to increase personal and family strengthening skills among offenders, restored citizens, and affected youth to support a successful transition back to family and community.
- 3) <https://prisonfamiliesalliance.org/ohio-2/> - Improve awareness about the effects of incarceration on families through education, support, and advocacy.
- 4) <https://www.sprc.org/> :Resource center for all suicide related concerns

Resources for Grandparents:

- 1) <https://www.facebook.com/groups/GrandsUnited/> - Grands United was formed for Grandparents and other family members or trying to gain guardianship of our grandchildren/child due to the disease of addiction affecting our family unit.
- 2) https://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/kinship_care.stm - Kinship Permanency Incentive Program (KPI) - (KPI) program was created to support children in the homes of family or friends who have committed to caring for them when birth parents cannot. KPI provides time-limited incentive payments to families caring for their kin

Books:

- 1) Beyond Tears: Living After Losing a Child by Ellen Mitchell - This book follows nine mothers who have each lost a child.
- 2) Dreamland by Sam Quiones- Understanding the opiate-heroin epidemic.
- 3) Rare Bird: A Memoir of Loss and Love by Anna Whiston-Donaldson
- 4) Passed and Present: Keeping Memories of Loved Ones Alive by Allison Gilbert
- 5) The Worst Loss: How Families Heal from the Death of a Child by Barbara D. Rosof
- 6) The Empty Room: Surviving the Loss of a Brother or Sister at Any Age by Elizabeth DeVitaRaeburn