

# How Children Grieve and How We Can Support Them

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CaringMatters

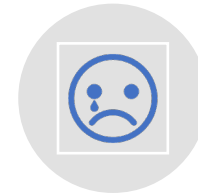




# Some Grief Myths



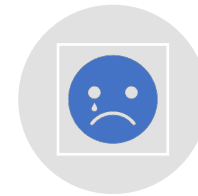
If you never knew someone you cannot grieve for them.



Grief is time limited. You can recover from grief.



Grief is a mental condition that follows distinct stages



You must have closure and then grief is resolved

# Grief Can Result From any Change and Loss

Taken From Tear Soup  
by Pat Schweibert



# Your Own Experience of Death and Loss

What age were you  
when you first  
remember  
experiencing a death?

What messages did  
you receive about  
death and grief as a  
child?

**How Many Children  
Were Grieving a  
Parent or Sibling  
Before COVID-19, In  
Maryland?**



CHILDHOOD BEREAVEMENT ESTIMATION MODEL

**1 in 12**

**children in  
Maryland**

will experience the death of a  
parent or sibling by age 18\*

[judishouse.org/cbem](https://judishouse.org/cbem)

\*2021 CBEM results are derived using 2015-2019 CDC data.

## Deaths Before COVID in MD: Cumulative Data 2015-2019

### Leading Causes of Death in Maryland<sup>2</sup>

Percentages reflect the proportion of total deaths caused by each of the leading causes for youth and adults according to the CDC.

Youth Ages 0 - 24 <sup>‡</sup>		Adults Ages 25 - 60 <sup>‡</sup>
20.7% - <b>Conditions Related to Birth</b>	<b>#1</b>	<b>Cancer</b> - 22.2%
16.1% - <b>Accidents</b>	<b>#2</b>	<b>Heart Disease</b> - 18.1%
14.8% - <b>Homicide</b>	<b>#3</b>	<b>Accidents</b> - 10.4%
8.5% - <b>Birth Defects</b>	<b>#4</b>	<b>Suicide</b> - 3.9%
6.5% - <b>Suicide</b>	<b>#5</b>	<b>Homicide</b> - 3.7%

17.5%-20% increase in **Parental** loss due to COVID-19


Journal of The American Medical Association (JAMA) 2021



## **Meet Michael: A Junior in High School**

The Story  
Behind the Grief

"Grief is **NOT** a disorder,  
a disease or sign of weakness.

It is an emotional, physical and spiritual  
**necessity**, the price you pay  
for love. 

The only cure for grief is to  
**grieve**" -- Earl Grollman



# Grief is different for each child and teen based on....

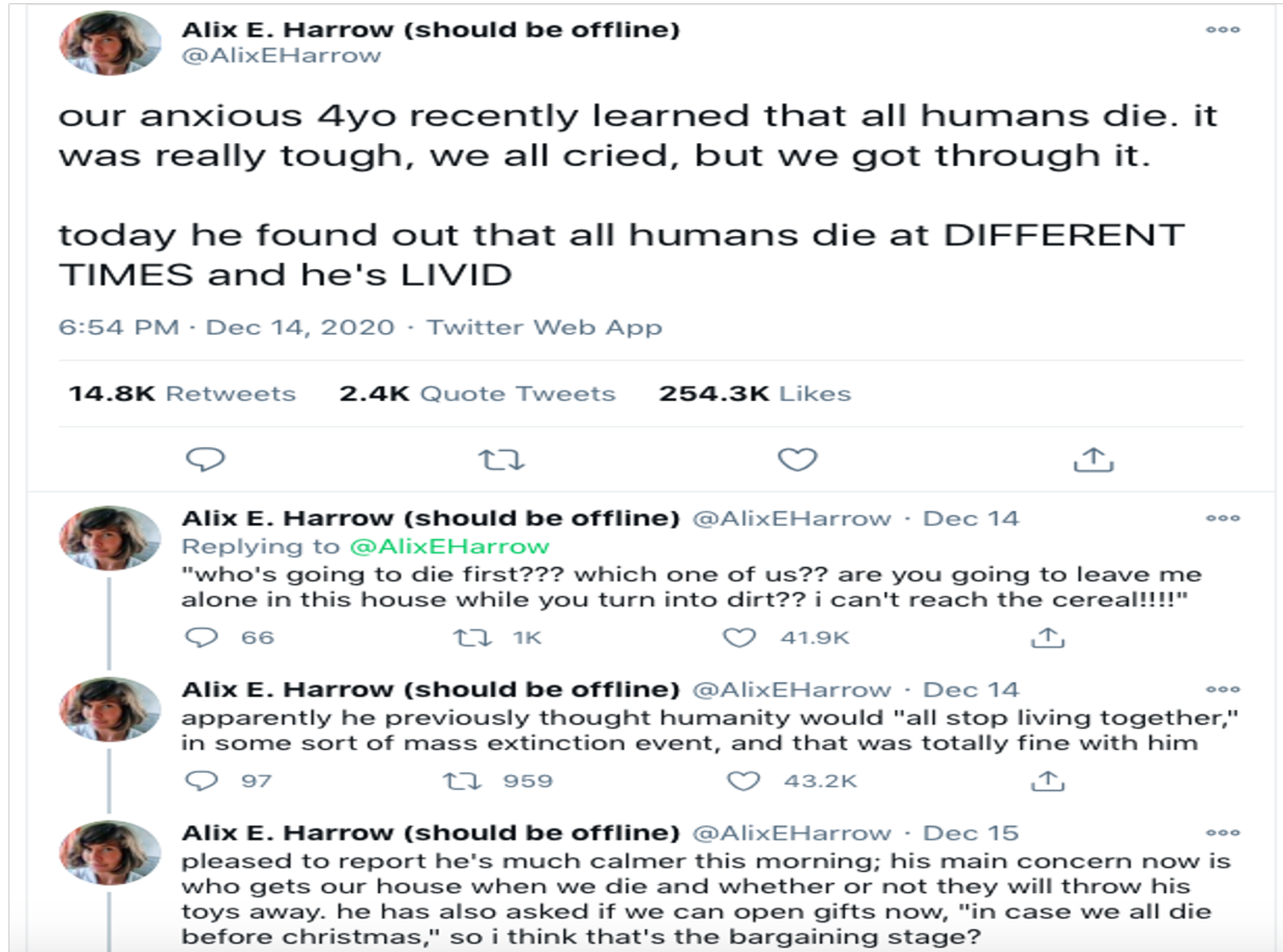
- Age & Developmental level of understanding about death



**Adults' grief is like wading through a deep murky river**

**Children puddle jump with their grief**

# Young children's perception of death is very different from adults'



**Alix E. Harrow (should be offline)** @AlixEHarrow

our anxious 4yo recently learned that all humans die. it was really tough, we all cried, but we got through it.

today he found out that all humans die at DIFFERENT TIMES and he's LIVID

6:54 PM · Dec 14, 2020 · Twitter Web App

14.8K Retweets 2.4K Quote Tweets 254.3K Likes

**Alix E. Harrow (should be offline)** @AlixEHarrow · Dec 14  
Replying to @AlixEHarrow  
"who's going to die first??? which one of us?? are you going to leave me alone in this house while you turn into dirt?? i can't reach the cereal!!!!!"

66 1K 41.9K

**Alix E. Harrow (should be offline)** @AlixEHarrow · Dec 14  
apparently he previously thought humanity would "all stop living together," in some sort of mass extinction event, and that was totally fine with him

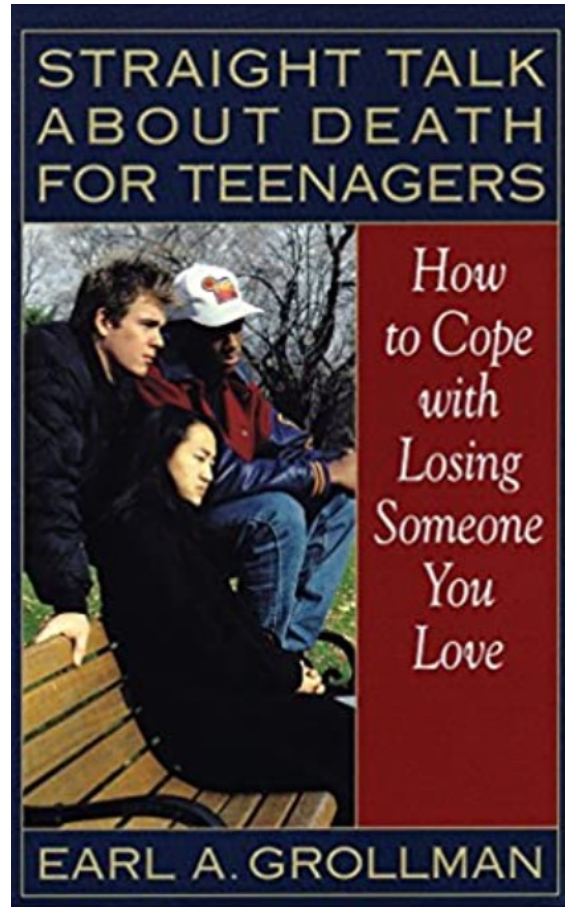
97 959 43.2K

**Alix E. Harrow (should be offline)** @AlixEHarrow · Dec 15  
pleased to report he's much calmer this morning; his main concern now is who gets our house when we die and whether or not they will throw his toys away. he has also asked if we can open gifts now, "in case we all die before christmas," so i think that's the bargaining stage?

# Grief is different for each child and teen based on..... ( Cont)



- Age & Developmental level of understanding about death
- Available support systems and the social context
- Their relationship with the deceased
- Previous experience with loss
- Pre-existing coping tools
- Ways of expressing strong emotions



## HIDDEN Grief: Behind The Behavior

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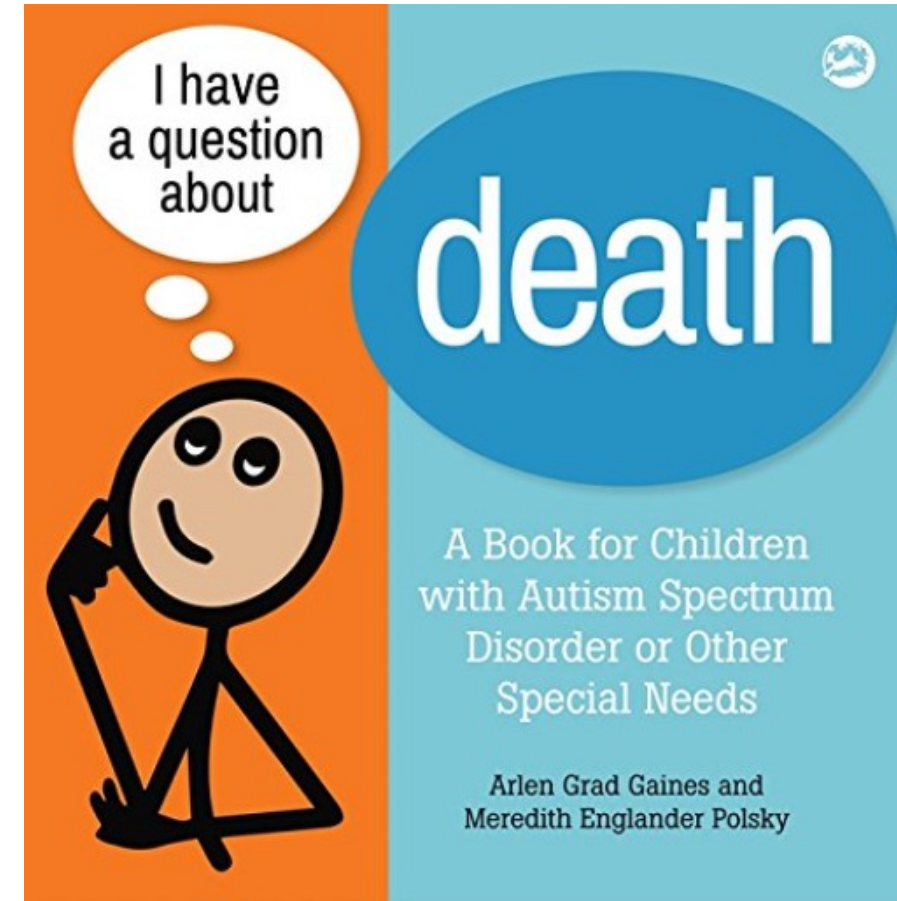
**GRIEF AND ANGER: MARTA**



**GRIEF AND TRAUMA: JONAH**

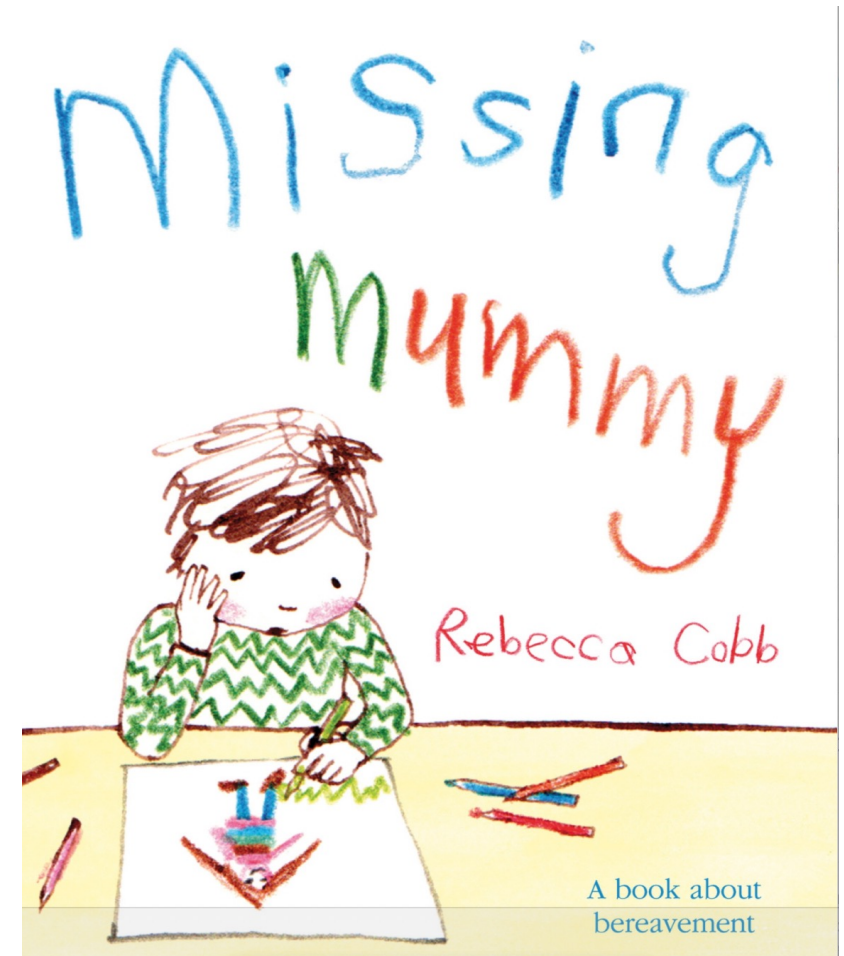
# Students of Color and Disenfranchised or Suffocated Grief (Dr. Tashel Bordere)

- **Disenfranchised Grief:** Grief that is **not acknowledged** (Any death in a community of color that goes unacknowledged like so many deaths in BIPOC communities go unacknowledged by schools)
- **Suffocated Grief:** Grief that **students of color** get **punished** for displaying (Remember all of the ways that students can display grief? BIPOC students are disproportionately disciplined for those behaviors compared to their white peers)



# How You Can Support Grieving Children and Their Families

1. Listen, Listen, Listen
2. Pick Your words carefully
3. Use their culture to provide a framework for grieving
4. Routines with flexibility
5. Offer choices
6. Encourage them to share memories
7. Identify support
8. Joy and sadness can sit side by side
9. Help & encourage families to communicate with school staff each year
10. Hold onto hope

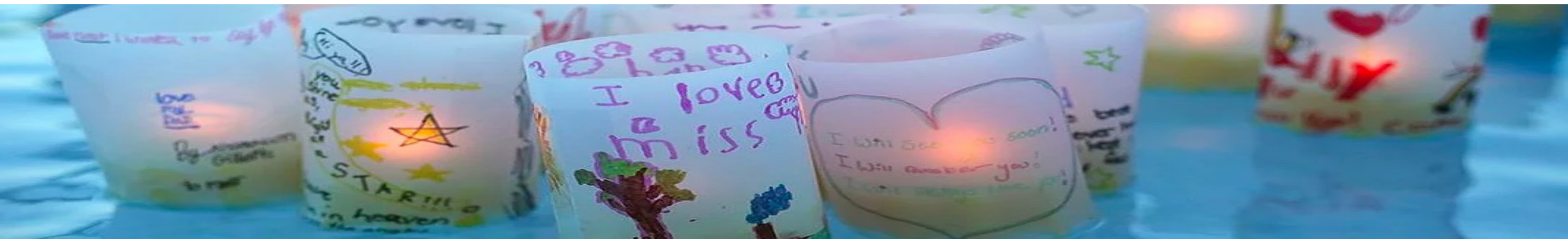


“Grief is like glitter. You can throw a handful of glitter into the air, but when you try to clean it up, you’ll never get it all. Even long after the event, you will still find glitter tucked into corners, it will always be there – somewhere.”

– Kevin

# How CaringMatters Can Help A School Professional and/or a Grieving Family

- Information, support and referral. On going
- Good Grief Clubs (in schools in MC). On going
- Camp Erin (in person). May 13-15, 2022
- Family Nights (on Zoom) Next one in the Fall 2022
- Parenting While Grieving (on Zoom) next session begins Fall 2022
- Adult Bereavement Peer Support Groups (on Zoom). On going





# Grief Resources in Maryland and Beyond

- National Alliance for Children's Grief: Support Directory  
<https://childrengrieve.org/find-support/9-find-support/26-programs-in-maryland>
- Eluna: National Bereavement Resource Guide  
<https://elunanetwork.org/national-bereavement-resource-guide>
- Wendt Center for Loss and Healing DC  
<https://www.wendtcenter.org/>
- Coalition to Support Grieving Students.  
<https://grievingstudents.org/>
- Dougy Center. (Resources Available in Spanish)  
<https://www.dougy.org/grief-support-resources>



# Thank You For Joining Me!

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**CaringMatters** [www.caringmatters.org](http://www.caringmatters.org)