

Understanding the  
Difference Between  
Grief and Mourning

*"Grief is what you think and feel on the inside when someone you love dies. It's numbness, sadness, anger, guilt, and sometimes relief, all rolled up into one. It's a pain in your gut and hole in your chest."*

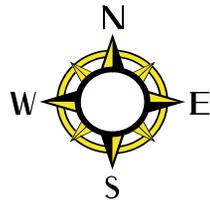
*"Mourning is expressing your grief, letting it out somehow. You mourn when you cry, talk about the death or the person who died, write about it, or punch a pillow."*

*"Everybody grieves inside when someone they love dies. But only people who mourn really heal and move on to live and love fully again."*

*"Mourning is awesome. Really. It's powerful and it's the only thing that works."*

*Dr. Alan Wolfelt  
Grief Counselor*

This pamphlet comes from Dr. Alan Wolfelt's book, "Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens," published by Companion Press in 2001. It will help you understand what grief is and give you some ideas on what you can do to mourn your loss. We hope it helps.



## Compass Points

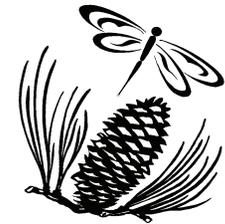
High Peaks Hospice: Essex County  
P.O. Box 192  
Port Henry, NY 12974  
518-942-6513  
800-639-8045

High Peaks Hospice: Tri-Lakes  
P.O. Box 840  
Saranac Lake, NY 12983  
518-891-0606  
877-324-1686

High Peaks Hospice: Warren County  
79 Glenwood Ave., 2nd Floor  
Glens Falls, NY 12801  
518-743-1672  
800-730-9477

# Teen Grief: Healing Your Grieving Heart

Compass Points:  
Navigating Your  
Grief Series



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Warren County  
800-730-9477

*It's important for you to know that what you are experiencing is normal. When someone we love dies, it can be hard to understand and cope with all the feelings and reactions we go through. Each of us grieves differently, so we can end up feeling alone or isolated at a time when we need the support of others.*

Dr. Alan Wolfelt, a grief counselor, tells us that there are six needs of mourning:

Need 1: Accept the reality of the death. It may take you weeks, even months, to really accept the fact that this person is gone. It's normal for it to take that long.

Need 2: Let yourself feel the pain of the loss. You need to feel it before you can heal it. By letting a little of it in at a time, it will seem more manageable.

Need 3: Remember the person who died. When someone you love dies, that person lives on in you through memory. Build those memories by talking about the person who died or looking at pictures.

Need 4: Develop a new self-identity. The way you defined yourself in relationship to this person has changed. Now you need to redefine yourself as someone who has survived a painful loss.

Need 5: Search for new meaning in life. The death of someone we love brings up big questions about the purpose of life and death. Dare to search for big answers to your questions.

Need 6: Let others help you, now and always. Talking about what happened helps develop perspective and helps us grow stronger. Talk to someone who cares about you and who won't try to talk you out of your feelings.

Dr. Wolfelt also offers dozens of ideas for healing your grieving heart. Here are ten of them.

### **Dr. Wolfelt's Top Ten Tips for Healing Your Grieving Heart**

*#10: Tell the story, over and over again if you need to.*

*#9: Don't expect yourself to mourn in a certain way or in a certain time.*

*#8: Cry. Laugh. Release your anger in constructive ways. Go with the flow.*

*#7: Do something fun, and dedicate it to the one you lost.*

*#6: If the person died because of an illness, learn about the disease and raise money to cure it.*

*#5: Know that the one you lost is with you in spirit.*

*#4: Ignore hurtful advice, and don't let other kids get to you if they're acting weird because they don't know what to say or do.*

*#3: Memorialize the person who died by writing a poem, planting a tree, or helping to create a scholarship fund in their honor.*

*#2: Know that you are loved, and that this person's presence in your life has made you a better person.*

*#1: Strive to grow through your grief. You can take this painful experience and bring something positive out of it.*

While it is normal to experience a wide range of emotions and to wonder about death, it is not normal to withdraw into a fantasy world or to start planning how you will die. If find yourself making specific plans about how to kill yourself, please get help.

If you are having trouble concentrating on your school work, tell your teachers that you are having a hard time coping with things right now. Talk with the school counselor or a trusted adult about it. You should also talk with someone if you're so depressed that you can't get out of bed, don't want to be with your friends, don't want to eat or eat way too much.

Sometimes the pain of losing someone you love can seem intolerable. While numbing yourself out with alcohol, drugs, or promiscuous sex might sound appealing, you may regret submitting yourself to unhealthy or disrespectful behavior. Talk with someone first.