

A photograph of a family walking away from the camera through a field of tall, dry grass. In the background, there is a small, rustic wooden building. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of late afternoon or early morning. The family consists of a man in a plaid shirt on the left, a woman in a light-colored sweater in the center, and a child in a light-colored sweater on the right. They are walking towards the wooden building in the distance.

# **THE ULTIMATE GRIEF GUIDE FOR YOUR FUNERAL HOME'S FAMILIES**

## INTRODUCTION

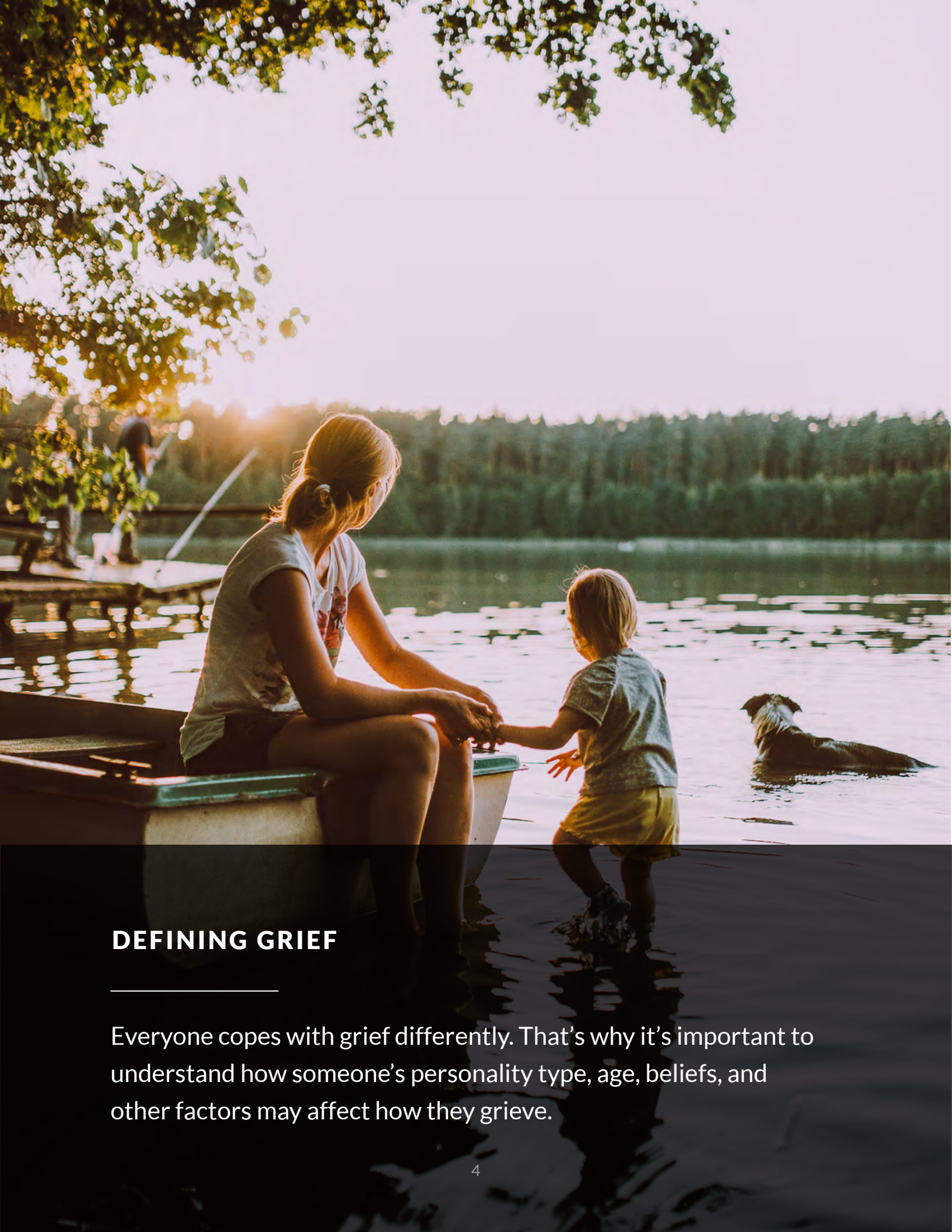
When families lose someone close to them, everyone grieves in their own way. As funeral directors, you know grief doesn't end with the funeral, and your funeral home's communication with families shouldn't either. Through establishing an effective aftercare program with educational grief resources and programs, your funeral home can help families cope with their grief long after the funeral service is over. In this eBook, we'll provide you with different ideas for helping your families understand and cope with their grief.



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## DEFINING GRIEF

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Everyone copes with grief differently. That's why it's important to understand how someone's personality type, age, beliefs, and other factors may affect how they grieve.

When it comes to a loss, everyone has their own way of processing and coping with their feelings. Because of this, it's [difficult to define grief](#), because everyone is different and there are different types of grief as well.

It's important for families to know that there is a difference between [grief and mourning](#). Those grieving often use them interchangeably, but they have two different meanings. Grief is the beginning of the mourning process that can last weeks, months, or even years. It's when loved ones are coping with a loss and may feel physically tired, achy, weak, or other [grief symptoms](#).

When someone is in the mourning stage, it means they've accepted the loss and are trying to adjust to a new routine without their loved one. It's important for families to know that there's no "normal" amount of time to mourn. It's different for everyone, and may last months, years, or even forever depending on the person they lost.

## GRIEF TYPES

Let's go over the different types of grief to get a better grasp on how to define it.

### **Anticipatory Grief**

This type of grief is when you're faced with an [impending loss](#), such as one that's due to a long-term illness. The grieving process begins while the person is still alive and causes people to feel guilty or have anxiety.

### **Delayed Grief**

This type of grief may occur if someone is too busy to grieve or they're putting off their grief. Both are harmful to the healthy grieving process, as they aren't facing the reality of their loved one's death.

### **Masked Grief**

Masked grief is when someone is unconsciously trying to avoid confronting their grief. They may turn to habits to hide their grief, like alcohol. It's important for them to confront grief and find healthy ways to cope with it.

### **Self-Grief**

This is when someone may be mourning themselves, such as if they've been diagnosed with a terminal illness. This also could be when someone is mourning the part of their life they shared with a deceased loved one.

### **Sudden Grief**

Sudden loss can lead to complicated grief because loved ones aren't able to process the death when it initially occurs. Emotions can be left unresolved and resurface later because that person hasn't had time to mourn their loss in a healthy way.

### **Normal Grief**

There really is no such thing as "normal grief," but healthy grieving eventually leads to the acceptance of the death. Although those grieving will always miss their loved one, their symptoms of grief get better with time after grieving in healthy ways.

### **Different for Everyone**

By understanding the different grief types, you can help families find healthy ways to grieve based on their specific circumstances. You also can look out for signs that they're putting off their grief and help guide them in a direction of healthy grieving.

As we just discussed, grief isn't defined by *how* to grieve, as it's different for everyone. It's the general *process* of coping with grief that is unique to the individual.

## **PERSONALITY TYPES**

There are different factors that can play a role in how someone grieves. To start, your [personality type](#) can influence how you grieve, whether it's more privately or with groups of people. Of course, not everyone grieves exactly how their personality type typically grieves, as they may see characteristics of themselves in other types. But, it can provide insight for those who are grieving on what techniques may work best for them. By identifying someone's dominant personality type, you can suggest some grieving methods.

The three main personality types we'll go over are introverts, extroverts, and ambiverts.

### **Introverts**

An [introvert](#) is shy and needs time alone to recharge after spending time with people. They may feel drained after the whole funeral experience and engaging in conversations with family, friends, and acquaintances. When coping with a loss, they may need time alone to reflect inwardly on their thoughts and feelings.

When adjusting back into the world, it may take them longer to get back into their regular routine. They may feel overwhelmed with people's questions asking how they're doing. Sometimes they may want to talk about it, but ultimately, they need to be alone with their thoughts to heal.

## Extroverts

An [extrovert](#) is outgoing and feels energized after spending time with others. While grieving, they may want to go out and be with their friends, which shouldn't be misjudged as ignoring grief. They also may be misjudged for taking time to themselves, since this may be out of their norm.

Loved ones may be concerned if they're not acting like themselves, but it's important to remember that they're grieving. The best route is to ask an extrovert what they need from you, whether it's giving them some space or spending time together.

## Ambiverts

An [ambivert](#) is a combination of an introvert and an extrovert. They may be more introverted or extroverted depending on the situation and how they are feeling. When faced with grief, they may see themselves both wanting to talk about their grief and needing some alone time. This combination works best for them, as they get to let out some feelings, but also have some privacy.

## CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Age also plays a role in how someone processes and copes with the loss of a loved one. For example, [children and adults](#) process grief differently, because young children may not understand the permanence of death.

According to [Kenneth Doka](#), the editor of OMEGA Journal of Death and Dying, [one in five children](#) will experience the death of a close loved one by the age of 18. Statistics like these show the importance of families knowing how their children may process grief and how they can help them cope.

Let's go over how much different age groups understand about death and some ways they may cope with grief. This is helpful information to share with parents who have children grieving a loss of a loved one.

### Children

Children ages two to four don't understand the permanence of death yet. The absence of the deceased is confusing and they may feel misunderstood or alone. By age nine to 12, they realize that everyone is going to die someday.

Everyone handles grief in their own way, but these are some ways [children may react to death](#), depending on their age and their own grieving process:

- Anger and irritability
- Asking excessive questions about the deceased
- Denial, shock, and confusion
- Drop in school performance
- Guilt
- Inability to concentrate
- Inventing games about dying
- Loss of appetite
- Physically achy
- Reverting to behaviors they had previously outgrown
- Unable to sleep or having nightmares
- Withdrawal from friends and activities

### **Teenagers**

As for teenagers, they understand the permanence of death, but they might be afraid of it. It may be hard for them to discuss these fears, and they want to regain a feeling of self-control. To feel back in control, they may partake in risky behaviors because they don't think anything bad will happen.

Adults can help teenagers and children grieve by having open conversations and listening when they want to talk.

Some other ways they can help are to:

- Grieve together
- Offer them love and reassurance
- Help them find a unique way to memorialize the deceased
- Encourage them to ask questions
- Seek professional guidance if necessary

### **Adults**

Since adults have fully developed brains and memories with the deceased, grief may be difficult because they're fully aware of their loss. Loved ones can help adults grieve by listening, providing love and support, and helping them memorialize the deceased.



Grief also may be more difficult for adults who [suffer from depression](#). Those grieving and those with depression have similar mental and physical symptoms, so when someone has both, it can amplify these symptoms.

Some simple ways you can help someone manage grief when they suffer from depression are to:

- Let them know you're supportive of their medical care and, without being too invasive, make sure they continue to seek whatever treatment they received before their loss.
- Be there to listen if they want to talk about their loss.
- Stay in contact with them and invite them to healthy activities, but don't be too pushy.

## MALES AND FEMALES

[Men and women](#) have different grieving methods due to their slightly different brain structures. According to a [study by Yale researchers](#) referenced in a HuffPost article, men are more left-brained than right-brained, while women tend to go back and forth between the two sides.

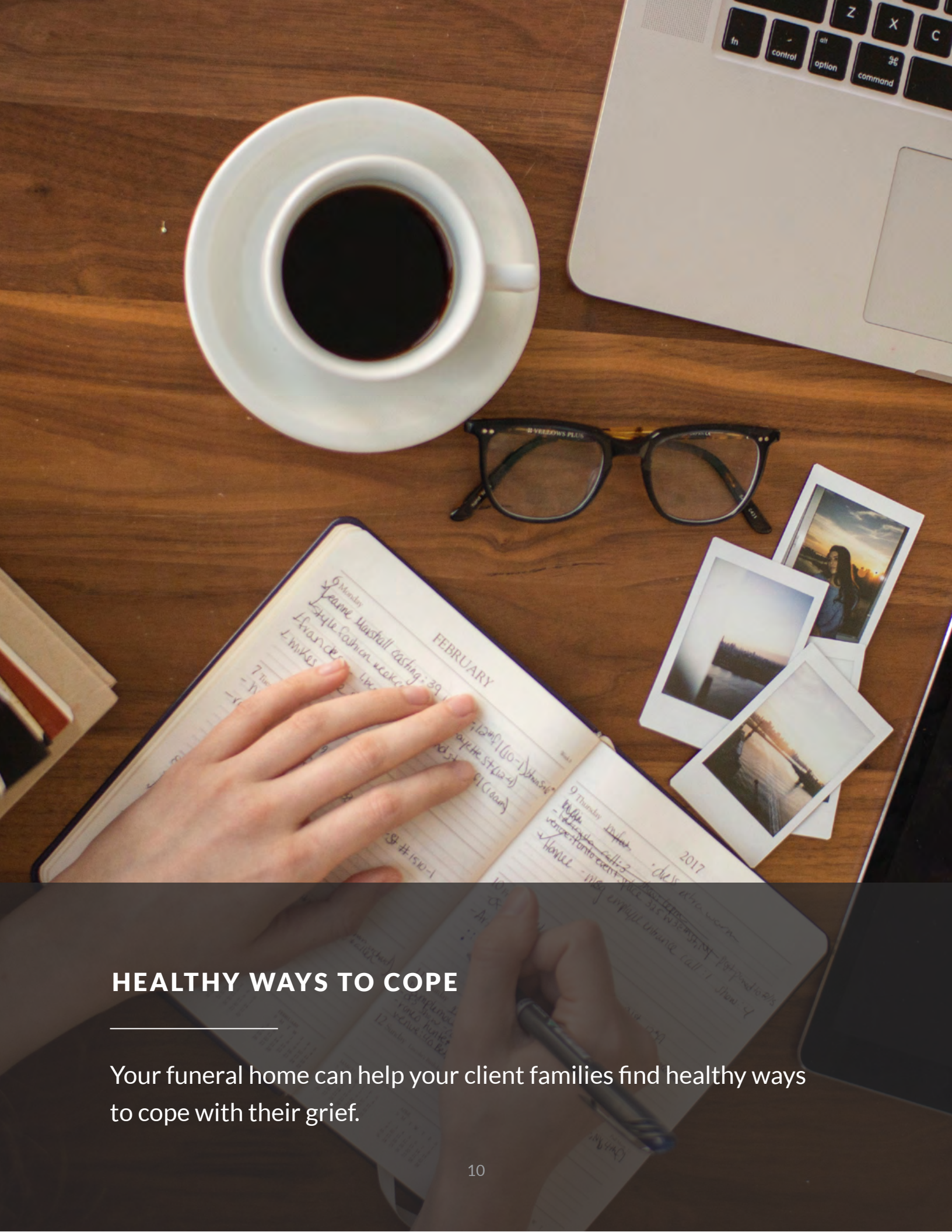
The study also found that women's brains have more emotional activity, while men's brains have more rational activity. And per day, women say up to 8,000 words and use as many as 10,000 gestures, while men use less than 4,000 words and less than 3,000 gestures.

When it comes to how they communicate grief, women want conversations to be intimate and express feelings, while men want conversations to have a clear purpose and solve a problem. Of course, not everyone may fit into their gender's typical grief communication methods, as they may see characteristics of themselves in both.

## OTHER FACTORS

Along with the factors mentioned above, there are many other things that influence how people grieve. It could be their religion, cultural beliefs, or even their location. Everyone's situation is different, as is their grieving process. If you want more information on different cultures' views on death, check out our weekly [cultural spotlight articles](#).

Regardless of the type of grief and the factors mentioned above, everyone needs to take care of themselves. If needed, encourage families to seek professional guidance, such as from your funeral home. You can provide them with grief resources and programs we'll discuss later in this eBook. In the next section, we'll discuss some healthy ways to grieve that you can suggest to families.



## HEALTHY WAYS TO COPE

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Your funeral home can help your client families find healthy ways to cope with their grief.

Even though there are no right or wrong ways to grieve, some grieving methods are healthier than others. Your funeral home can help families get on a healthy grieving path by suggesting healthy ways to cope with grief.

There are many healthy activities your families can choose from that relate to their hobbies and interests. You can help them find an activity that's right for them by suggesting the healthy grieving activities listed below.

#### FOR NATURE LOVERS:

- Get out in nature and take a walk on a hiking trail or a bike ride through the park. Studies show that [nature](#) and fresh air helps regulate serotonin levels in the brain, which helps improve our mood and overall happiness. It also is proven to reduce blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and overall negative thoughts.
- Sweat it out! [Exercise](#) is a great way to relieve stress while keeping your body mentally and physically healthy. Other mental health [benefits of exercise](#) include improving self-confidence, decreasing anxiety, and boosting your memory. You can tell families about any outdoor workout classes in your area or suggest some beautiful trails to take a run or bike ride on.
- Families can embrace their green thumb and honor their loved one by planting something in their memory. It could be a tree, bush, flower, or even a garden. Families can choose the deceased's favorite plant or flower, or you can suggest plants that grow best in your area.

#### FOR THE CRAFTY:

- For those who are crafty, take on a new craft project such as a crochet blanket, canvas painting, pottery, beaded jewelry, or another craft project. Families can keep them, give them to loved ones, donate them, or sell them at a craft fair.
- Craft projects also are great for memorializing a loved one. There are several [DIY mementos](#) families can make to memorialize the deceased, such as a photo lantern, photo wreath, or a scrapbook.

#### FOR THE MUSICAL:

- Music heals the soul. Listening to music can help families grieve their deceased loved one. You can suggest this list of [memorial songs](#) to remind families of their loved one.
- For those who like to sing or play an instrument, this is another healthy way to grieve through music. Whether it's singing along to one of the memorial songs above or singing or playing one of the deceased's favorite songs.
- Writing a song is another way to memorialize and grieve a loved one. It can be something a loved one keeps to themselves or they can share it with their family members who also are grieving the loss.

#### FOR THE COOKS:

- [Food and grieving](#) go together like peanut butter and jelly. People turn to their favorite comfort food when they're feeling down, like when grieving a loss. Families can cook their favorite dish or bake their favorite dessert to give them a little comfort during a challenging time.
- For the adventurous cooks, they can test out a new recipe they've always wanted to try. They can have a quiet meal to themselves, or invite family over for dinner to grieve together.
- For those who love to bake, they can make a delicious treat for an upcoming bake sale, or just to share with friends and neighbors.

#### FOR RELAXING:

- Some people who are grieving may prefer a more relaxing activity. One simple suggestion is for them to watch their favorite movie or TV show. It may be just the thing they need to have a small escape from reality and put a smile on their face.
- For those who don't watch much TV, an alternative is to read. It could be a book, magazine, newspaper, an online blog, or whatever they enjoy reading in their free time.



#### FOR EXPRESSING FEELINGS:

- It isn't healthy to let emotions build up inside until one day they explode out of you. One way those grieving can let their feelings out is to talk with trusted loved ones.
- Or, for those who are more introverted, they can consider writing in a journal or starting a blog to express their grief.

#### FOR HELPING OTHERS:

- Helping others is a rewarding way to honor and grieve a loved one. Families can volunteer together, perhaps at your town's [animal shelter](#) to play with animals or at a local nursing home to read to the elderly.
- Another way to grieve and help others is through donating to charities. It could be collecting clothing, canned food, or other necessary goods for people in need.

If none of these activities spark an interest for someone, you can suggest that they start a new hobby. Learning a new activity can help someone who's grieving, but make sure they aren't using it to put off their grief entirely.

Also, you can provide families with healthy grieving resources that we'll go over in the next section of this eBook.





## GRIEF RESOURCES

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By providing families with grieving resources, you can become the go-to grief resource in your community.

We've compiled a list of several informational grief resources that you can share with your families.

## **GRIEF BLOGS AND MAGAZINES**

### **Diary of a Widower**

This blog by Tom Overdiek is about how he coped with the loss of his wife after a car accident. He discusses raising his children, going back to work, remembering important anniversaries, and other topics.

### **On Coming Alive**

This blog by Lexi Behrndt is about the loss of her young child and how writing her blog helped her cope with her grief.

### **Still Standing Magazine**

This magazine focuses on coping with the loss of a child or infertility and how to embrace life again after losing a loved one.

### **Missing Peace**

This blog by Kristi Kirk is about how she's coping with the loss of her husband and son. She discusses a variety of topics including how she honors their memory and how she and her two daughters are trying to heal and find peace.

### **Losing Your Parents**

This blog by Lisa Snyder is about the loss of her parents from cancer and how she copes with her losses and honors their memory.

### **Confessions of a Funeral Director**

This blog by Caleb Wilde is a unique perspective on grief and discusses inspiring and sometimes comical stories from the eyes of a funeral director.

### **Frazer Consultants**

Our blog covers a variety of grief topics, from grieving the [loss of a significant other](#) to [acknowledging grief anniversaries](#). We also cover other grief-related topics including memorialization, personalization, and more.

## BOOKS

- Educator and grief counselor [Dr. Alan Wolfelt](#) has written many books geared for adults and children about the grief of losing a loved one. His collection of books is on [the online bookstore](#) of the [Center for Loss and Life Transition](#), an organization led by Wolfelt.
- [Motherless Daughters](#) and [Motherless Mothers](#), both by Hope Edelman, New York Times bestselling author.

*"Motherless Daughters explores the myriad ways that losing a mother can affect almost every aspect and passage of a woman's life."*

*"In Motherless Mothers, Edelman uses her own story as a prism to reveal the unique anxieties and desires that these women experience as they raise their children without the help of a living maternal guide."*

- [Second Firsts: Live, Laugh, and Love Again](#) by Christian Rasmussen — coach, crisis intervention specialist, and speaker about life after loss.  
*"In Second Firsts, Rasmussen walks you through her life reentry process to help you break grief's spiral of pain, so you can stop simply surviving and begin to live again."*
- [Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief](#) by Martha Whitmore Hickman, author of more than 20 books.  
*"For those who have suffered the loss of a loved one, here are thoughtful words to strengthen, inspire and comfort."*
- [Through a Season of Grief: Devotions for your Journey from Mourning to Joy](#) by authors Kathy Leonard and Bill Dunn.  
*"These devotions offer biblical comfort and practical teachings that will enable you take steps forward each day toward healing."*
- [Grieving with Hope: Finding Comfort as You Journey Through Loss](#) by authors Samuel J. IV Hodges and Kathy Leonard.  
*"Practical and straightforward, yet warm and compassionate, Grieving with Hope clarifies the popular misconception that people move through stages of grief."*



- **[I Will Not Forget You: Daily Meditations for Grieving Widows and Widowers](#)** by Ellen Sue Stern, author of 20 books.  
*"Filled with guidance and encouragement, hope and perspective, I Will Not Forget You pairs empowering affirmations with wise and insightful quotes."*
- **[Grief Is a Journey: Finding Your Path Through Loss](#)**, by Dr. Kenneth J. Doka — licensed mental health counselor, professor, and grief expert.  
*"Dr. Kenneth Doka explores a new, compassionate way to grieve, explaining that grief is not an illness to get over but an individual and ongoing journey."*

## QUOTES AND POEMS

- We compiled this list of [inspirational grief quotes](#) for coping with the loss of parents, grandparents, a significant other, a child, or a pet.
- These inspiring [quotes and poems](#) focus on grieving the loss of a spouse or partner.
- Our [grief quotes and poems Pinterest board](#) is filled with inspiring quotes for anyone who has suffered a loss.
- These [memorial poems](#) honor America's fallen heroes.
- These [spring-themed poems](#) depict how life goes on after suffering pain.
- These [fall-themed poems](#) show how life changes after losing a loved one.
- These [holiday and winter-themed poems](#) represent the love and memory of deceased loved ones.

## SONGS

- This collection of [21 songs for grieving](#) can provide families with comfort and help them through their grief journey.
- These [memorial songs](#) can help families honor and remember their loved ones.
- This [collection of songs](#) from a variety of different genres is perfect for paying tribute to moms.
- These [tribute songs](#) are great for remembering the special memories with a father.

## GAMES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

### **Apart of Me**

[Apart of Me](#) is an online children's game for helping them grieve the loss of a loved one. Through quests, recording memories, hearing user stories, and other features, families can help each other work through their grief. The game is designed by experts in child bereavement and family psychology.

### **365 Days of Healing**

With [Frazer-powered websites](#), you can offer your families our free 365 Days of Healing message service. They'll receive a daily grief support email during their first year of grief.

## ORGANIZATIONS

### **The Compassionate Friends: Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

This organization has more than 600 chapters throughout the United States and online communities for families to work through their grief together.

### **Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)**

TAPS is a support group for families who had a loved one die while serving or as a result of serving. Families can get support from others who understand their grief.

### **Family Lives On Tradition Program**

This program helps grieving children and their families remember their loved ones through traditions and helps them cope with their grief.

### **The Moyer Foundation: Camp Erin**

Camp Erin is the largest national bereavement program for grieving children and teenagers who lost someone close to them. The camp is free of charge and has several locations throughout the United States and Canada.

### **Open to Hope: Finding Hope After Loss**

This non-profit foundation seeks to help people grieve and find hope after a loss through informational articles, videos, books, and other resources.

### **The Dinner Party**

This organization hosts [dinner parties](#) throughout the United States for those grieving a loss and seeking support. The Dinner Party community mostly consists of people 20 to 30 years old who have experienced a significant loss.

### Death Café

Since September 2011, this organization has held almost 5,000 death cafés. These [death cafés](#) are non-profit events hosted by volunteers to provide a judgment-free and respectful space to talk about death.

### Modern Loss

This organization is a place for those grieving to find grieving resources and seek support from others in a judgment-free environment.

### Grief Share

This organization provides those grieving a support group led by people who understand what they're going through. Through seminars, meetings, and other grief resources, those grieving can find hope and heal together. There are thousands of Grief Share support groups throughout the United States, Canada, and a few other countries.

### Bereaved Parents of the USA (BPUSA)

This national non-profit self-help group offers support, hope, and understanding to those grieving the loss of their children, grandchildren, or siblings. [BPUSA has chapters](#) that meet monthly around the United States.





## GRIEF PROGRAM IDEAS

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Through creating grief events, workshops, and other programs, your funeral home can provide families with the tools and techniques to cope with their grief.



Your funeral home and its staff play a major role in helping families cope with their grief. You can help guide them to a healthy grieving path through offering a variety of grief programs and events.

When planning events, the [Facebook events](#) feature may be helpful in organizing details and inviting guests. You can include event details such as the date, time, location, and a brief description. Plus, this is a great way to spread the word about your event, as those you invite can share the event and invite their friends.

From educational workshops to remembrance events, we've come up with a variety of grief program ideas to help inspire your funeral home.

### GRIEF WORKSHOPS

Your funeral home can offer families educational workshops for working through their grief. You even can stream them online through [Facebook Live](#) for those who can't attend or prefer this method.

Below are a few topic suggestions that families can benefit from while grieving their loss:

- Healthy ways to cope with grief.
- How to cope with an unexpected death.
- How to cope with anticipatory grief.
- Why grief is different for everyone.
- How to cope during year one of grief.

### REMEMBRANCE EVENTS

Remembrance events allow families to honor and remember their deceased loved one. By finding a way to memorialize their loved one, it may help ease their grief.

Here are a few remembrance event ideas that your funeral home can host for families who have lost someone special to them:

- Host a [holiday remembrance event](#) for families' loved ones who passed away.
- Host an outdoor remembrance event in your funeral home's [memorial garden](#).
- Have an online remembrance event for families who live far away.
- Host an event for families in different grief years, like year one, year five, etc.
- Have events on special holidays like Valentine's Day for those struggling with grief.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

By partnering with local organizations, your funeral home can host grieving events for your community. It's a great way to bring the community together to grieve and honor their loved ones.

Here are a few ideas for helping your community heal from their losses:

- Organize a pet therapy event with your local [animal shelter](#) to comfort those grieving.
- Host an event for [creating personalized mementos](#) in honor of loved ones.
- Have a community walk/run to honor and grieve those the community has lost.
- Organize a volunteer event in your community to turn grief into positive action.
- Host a community potluck or dinner for coming together during a time of grief.

## OTHER PROGRAM IDEAS

Sometimes, families may need the support of someone who understands what they're going through. This could be a friend, grief counselor, or other trusted people in their community.

These are a few ways your funeral home can provide families with support and show you care:

- Organize support groups for those grieving to share their stories and comfort one another.
- Get a [therapy dog](#) for your funeral home to comfort the grieving and relieve their stress.
- Have one-on-one discussions with people about how they can cope with their loss.
- Have online Q&A discussions on your social media pages about coping with grief.
- Provide professional grief counselors for your families or become a certified counselor.

If you're interested in becoming a certified grief counselor, check out The American Academy of Grief Counseling's [Certified Grief Counselor](#) certification program.



## CONCLUSION

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By educating families about how to cope with grief in healthy ways, you can help guide them through their grief journey. Through providing grief resources and hosting programs, you can provide them additional support during their time of loss. As we discussed, grief is different for everyone and doesn't end with the funeral. Your funeral home can show you support them and want to help them grieve and honor their loved ones long after the service.



## CONTACT FRAZER CONSULTANTS



Frazer Consultants is a technology company that helps funeral professionals reimagine the funeral experience for their families.



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