

THE GRIEF BRIEF

Back to School Issue



Emma's Place

Staten Island Grief Center for
Children and Families

Support ~ Community ~ Hope

A Learning Experience



Now is the time of year when we look at the calendar and realize the days of summer are dwindling down. Instead of enjoying bright sunshine well into the evening, we notice the long summer nights are getting shorter. The number of back to school commercials on TV increase, and stores are filled with back to school sales. All these signs point to the fact that the start of school is getting close.

For most families, the beginning of school creates those familiar butterflies in the stomach. Children may feel sad about leaving the fun and freedom of summer behind. Parents begin to

wonder how they are going to have the energy to juggle work and the demands of a new school year. But for grieving families, the start of school may initiate a range of intense emotions and anxieties.

Parents may worry how their children are going to cope with their feelings of grief, interact with friends, and stay focused in school. Children worry about being separated from their loved ones, and are fearful that they'll lose another loved one while they are in school. They also worry about feeling different from their peers who haven't lost a loved one. The good news is that both parents and teachers can help to make a grieving child's transition from the summer to the school year smoother.

It would be helpful for parents to:

- Set up some coping tools with their child before they start school. These can include:
 - Giving them a small picture of you, or special memento that will help them feel connected to you when you are separated during the day.
 - Putting notes in their school lunch or backpack to let them know they are loved.
 - Explaining to the child that friends may seem a little shy with them at first, but that has more to do with the friends not knowing what to say, rather than anything about the child themselves, and help them formulate some conversation starters.
 - Letting your child know it is OK to have fun.
- Inform your child's teachers and the school counselor that your child is grieving, so:
 - Teachers can understand the reason why your child may seem distractible or may be forgetful.
 - Counselors can check in with your child periodically and set up some times when they can speak with you to update you on how your child is doing and address any issues.
 - Teachers can allow the grieving child to look at photos or keep mementos out on their desk to help with any separation anxiety they may be feeling.
 - School personnel can ensure other children are not leaving a grieving child out.

With schools and parents working together, a grieving child's return to school can be a time of growth and support rather than a time of fear and anxiety.

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At Emma's Place you will

- Be supported by those who have journeyed through their own path of grief.
- Find a community of welcoming, caring and committed individuals who will listen.
- Learn healthy grief processing in a private, safe-setting which facilitates healing while offering the hope and tools to move forward to a meaningful life.

*"What is to give
light must endure
burning."
-Victor Frankl*

Emma's Place Schedule

Emma's Place
Staten Island Grief & Loss
Center for Children and
Families
1076 Forest Avenue
Staten Island, NY 10310
www.emmasplacesi.com

Contact us at:
Telephone: 347.850.2322
E-mail:
info@emmasplacesi.org



Support ~ Community ~ Hope

We rely on you.

Our Center is supported through donations, grants, memorials and bequests; which will allow us to provide these services at no cost to the children and families it serves.

There are a variety of ways to support Emma's Place and to help reach grieving children and families. We are currently looking for a permanent, cozy home for Emma's Place. Anyone with knowledge of a safe, house or building for rent or as a donation would be greatly appreciated.

Donations can be made out directly to Staten Island Grief Center and mailed to Emma's Place, 1076 Forest Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10310. Emma's Place staff members are available to make presentations or talk further on the phone – please contact us at 347-850-2322 or info@emmasplacesi.org

We greatly appreciate your generosity!

CHILDREN'S GROUPS

1st & 3rd Tuesdays

Ages 5-9	5:30 pm
Ages 10-14	5:30 pm
Ages 15-19	TBA

ADULT GROUPS TBA

PARENTS GROUP
Coinciding with
Children's Groups at
5:30 pm

Read more about
Emma's Place at:
[Staten Island Live
Column](#) or see our
Facebook Page!

GRIEF SUPPORT ACTIVITY

As you help your grieving child pack their backpack for school, you can also help them "pack in" the memories and love of their lost loved one by doing this activity with your child:

1. Cut out the back pack and paste an envelope on the back of the picture with the flap facing front.
2. Cut out the pictures of all the other objects.
3. Help your child think of a memory they shared with the lost loved one, a special way the loved one made the child feel loved, or something the child loved about the person that died.
4. On the back of each object either draw or write about the memories, or love that the child shared with the lost loved one.
5. Place these objects in the envelope on the back of the back pack (you may need to fold the objects).
6. Pack this in the child's back pack or school bag and explain to them that when they miss their loved one they can unpack their backpack and connect with their loved one, and know that even though their loved one is not here, they can still "have their back".

Materials: Scissors, Crayons (or Colored Pencils), Pencils, Small Envelope, Glue or Tape

