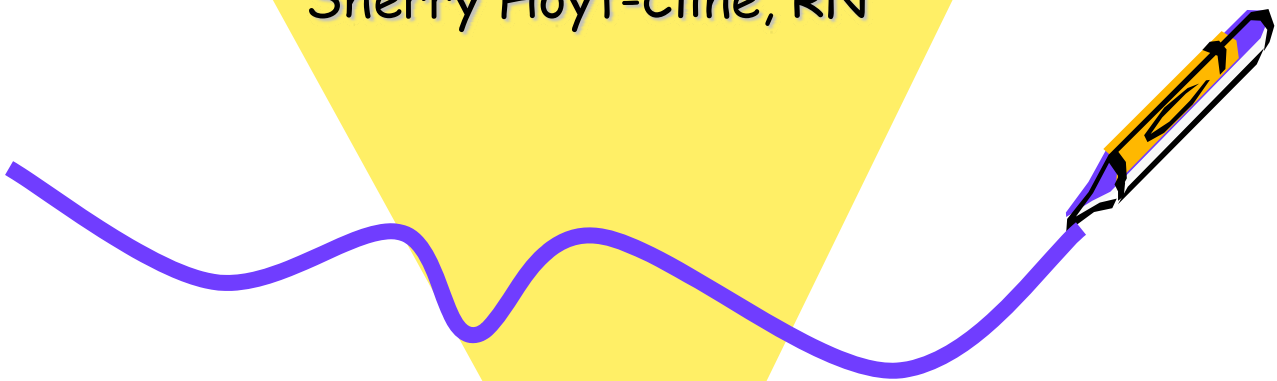
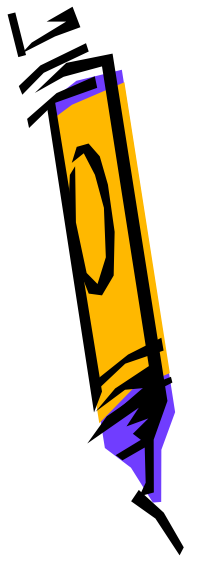


# Kids, Grief and Loss

Sherry Hoyt-Cline, RN



# Kids, Grief and Loss

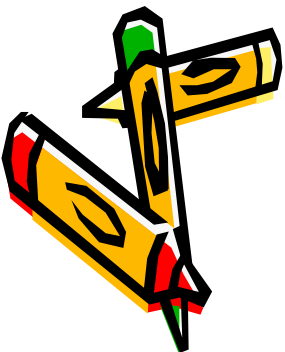
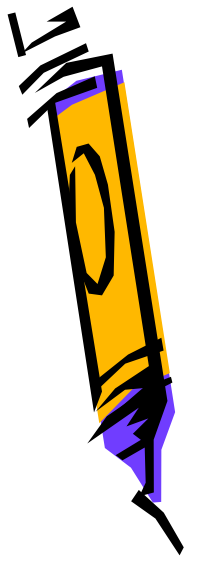


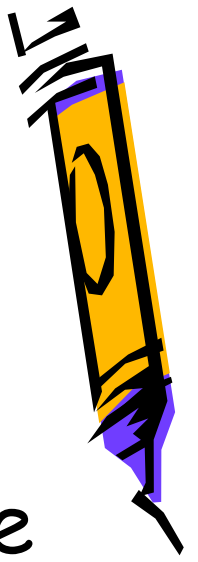
What's the matter with kids today?

Today's children are confronted with by a set of experiences and memories unimaginable or incomprehensible to us.

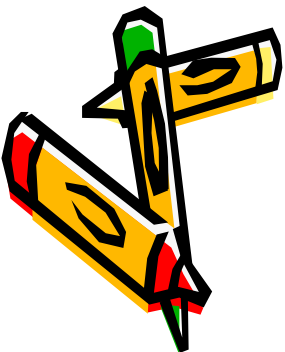


Today's  
children  
witness  
violence on a  
daily basis

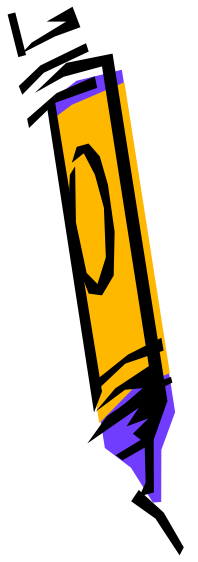




- Children lack mature, wise role models to provide love and assurance for a safe journey into adulthood.
- They are unable to express their feeling or work through their grief.



# Facts about children's grief Death



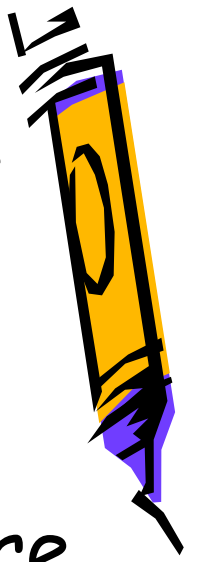
- 12% of all childhood deaths are caused by guns. 11 children are killed every day.
- Auto accidents are the leading cause of accidental deaths. Drownings # 2
- 20% of today's children will have experienced the death of a parent by the end of high school.



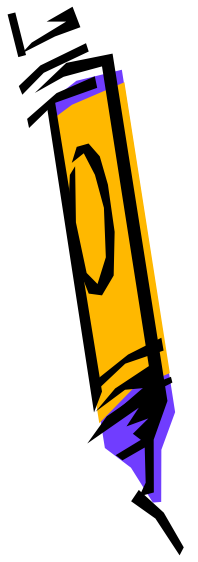
# Facts about children's grief

## Divorce

- Over 6 million children are living in divorced families.
- 33% will lose contact with one parent.
  - 50% will experience parental divorce by the end of high school.



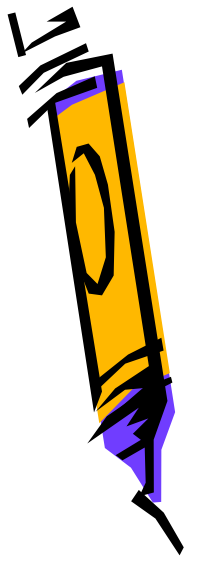
# Facts about children's grief **Sexual Abuse**



- 1 out of 3 girls are sexually abused by age 18.
- 1 out of 7 boys are sexually abused by age 18.



# Facts about children's grief



## Relocation

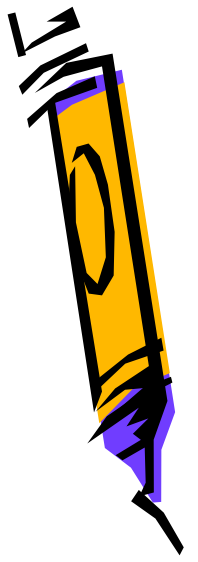
- Today's children will experienced an average of 4 moves per family by the end of high school.





# Facts about children's grief

## Exposure to Violence



- By age 14, a child will witness 18,000 deaths (usually violent murders) on TV.
- 1 in 6 children between the ages of 10 and 17 has seen or knows someone who has been shot.

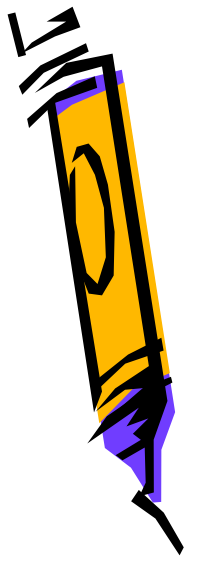


# Childhood Loss

## Relationships

Death of:

- Parent
- Grandparent
  - Sibling
  - Friend
- Classmate
  - Pet



# Childhood Loss

## The Environment

Fire

Floods

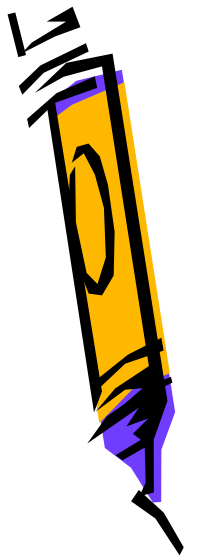
Hurricanes

Other natural disasters

Relocation

New schools

Changes in family



# Childhood Loss

## External Objects

Favorite Toy

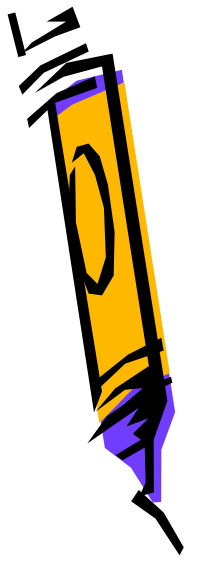
Blanket

Pacifier

Teddy Bear

Loss through robbery

Or misplaced



# Childhood Loss

## Loss of Self

Physical parts of the body

Tooth

Arm

Eye

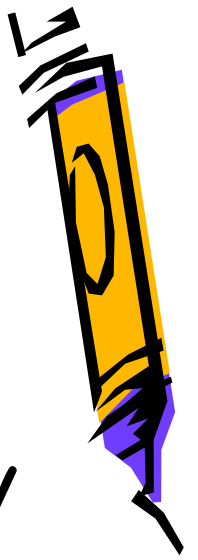
Loss of self esteem

Physical

Sexual

Emotional

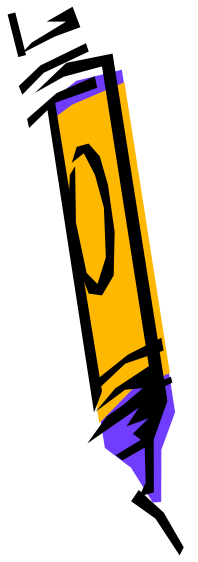
Deprivational Abuse



# Childhood Loss

## Loss Related to Skills and Abilities

Held back in school  
Not chosen for team  
Overweight, injured, illness  
Physical disability  
Dyslexia, ADHD  
Other developmental  
differences



# Childhood Loss

## Loss related to Habits

Change in eating patterns or

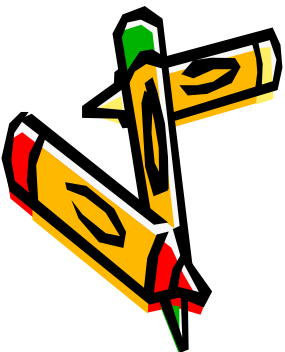
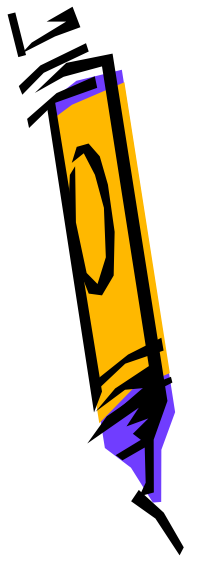
Daily routines

Beginning or ending school

Sucking thumb

Biting fingernails

Twirling hair



# Childhood Loss

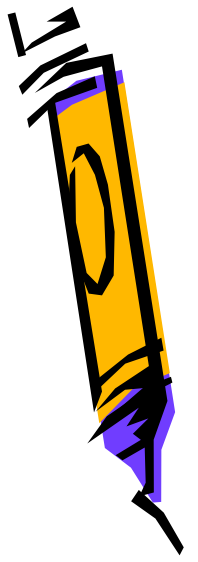
Loss of the Protection  
of the Adult World:

Loss of a Future

Loss of role models

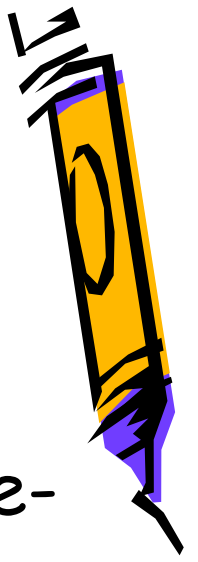
Fear of school as a  
dangerous place

Choice of violence as a way  
of solving problems





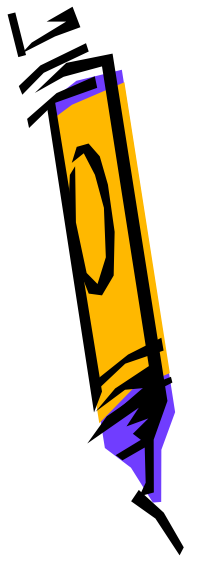
# TEN COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CHILDREN AND GRIEF



- **Myth #1:** There is a predictable and orderly stage-like progression to the experiences of grief and mourning.
- **Truth:** No two people are alike and neither is their grief. Each person approaches it in his/her own way and at his or her own pace. Stages are just definitions, one can move in or out backslide or even skip a stage.



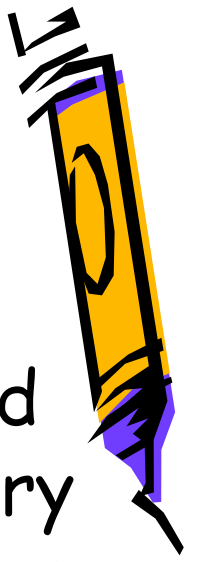
# TEN COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CHILDREN AND GRIEF



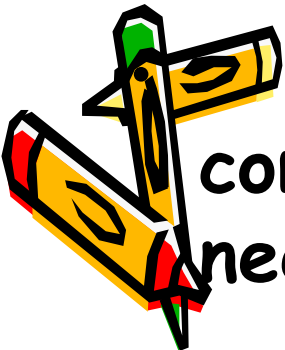
- **Myth #2:** A child's grief and mourning is short in duration.
- **Truth:** As above, each one of us takes as long as we need to do what we need to reach the "recovery" stage. Age makes no difference.



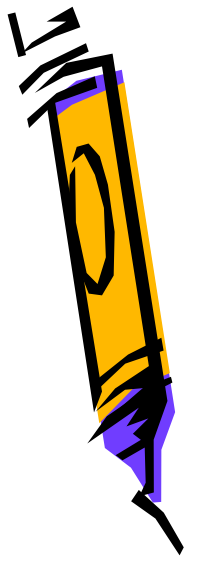
# TEN COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CHILDREN AND GRIEF



- **Myth #3:** Adults should avoid topics that cause a child to cry and associate tears of grief as personal weakness.
- **Truth:** Often well meaning adults in order to protect children, directly or indirectly inhibit tears. Also, crying children can make adults feel helpless and they do not want to put themselves in that position. Crying is a great natural stress reliever, communicates hurt and the need to be comforted.



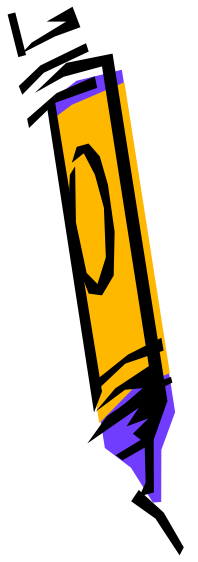
# TEN COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CHILDREN AND GRIEF



- **Myth #4:** Infants and toddlers are too young to grieve and mourn.
- **Truth:** Noted clinical thanatologist Alan Wolfelt, emphasizes that "any child who is old enough to love, is old enough to mourn."



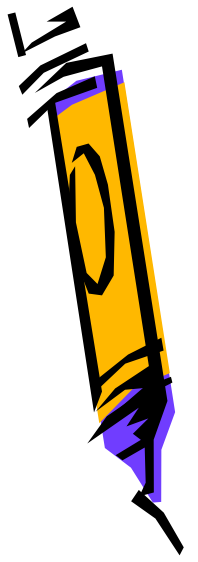
# TEN COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CHILDREN AND GRIEF



- **Myth #5:** Children are not affected by the grief and mourning of the adults who surround them.
- **Truth:** When adults deny their grief/or hide it from the kids believing falsely it is in their best interest, children lack the permission to feel their feelings and work through their grief. In some cases, what adults repress, children express and then feel confused by mixed messages.



# TEN COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CHILDREN AND GRIEF



- **Myth #6:** The trauma of childhood bereavement always leads to a maladjusted adult life.
- **Truth:** Children are resilient; if given love, support and permission to work through their feeling, they will grow strong and able to weather further sorrows

or disappointments in the future as healthy adults.



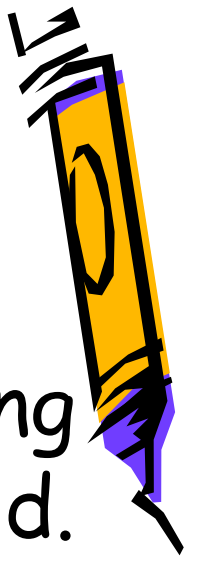
# TEN COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CHILDREN AND GRIEF



- **Myth #7:** Children are better off if they don't attend funerals.
- **Truth:** Not allowing children to attend funerals creates an environment of denial that does not allow them to actively participate in the grieving process. The child sees at the funeral how people honor the life of the deceased, give comfort and support to one another openly and learn that it is OK to mourn. Children learn how the family says "goodbye" and how to show respect for the departed loved one.



# TEN COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CHILDREN AND GRIEF

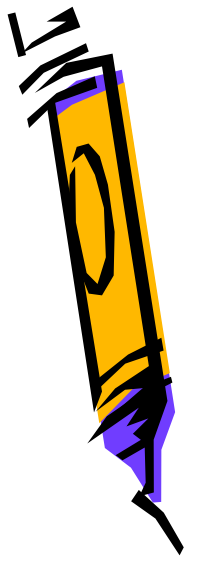


- Myth #8: An active playing child is not a grieving child.
- Children mourn differently than adults. Some may cry, get angry or appear not to feel anything. A child can work out feelings best through play; thus, what appears frivolous to us may well be an important part of the grieving process to him/her.





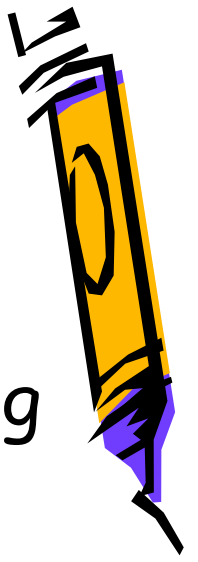
# TEN COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CHILDREN AND GRIEF



- **Myth #9:** Adults should be able to instantly teach or explain to children about death/loss.
- **Truth:** It's OK to admit we don't have all the answers and not feel guilty.



# TEN COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CHILDREN AND GRIEF

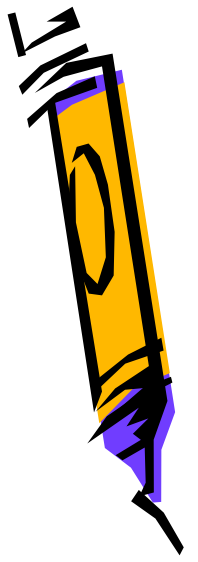


- **Myth #10:** The goal in helping bereaved children is to "get them over" grief and mourning and move on.
- **Truth:** When put on a time table, both adults and children are denied the patience to live with work through their grief at their pace. Too many equate "getting over it" with having to forget the loved one. One can remember the deceased without the pain connecting them.

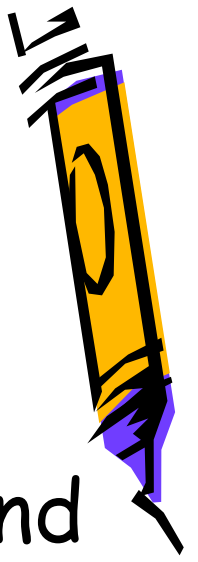


# What Not to Do

- Don't make false promises
- Don't fall apart or react with excessive emotion
- Don't pass judgment
- Don't become an inquisitor
- Don't preach, criticize, blame



# Helping children handle loss

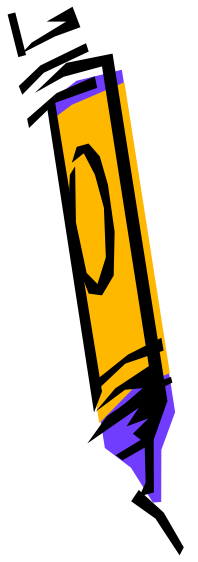


- Encourage them to talk and ask questions
- Be available when they are ready to grieve
- Give them opportunities for creative expression

Create opportunities for playtime

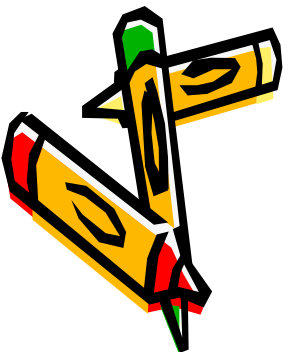
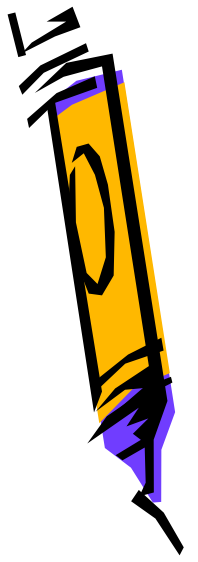


- Be realistic in expectations
- Be aware of age and developmental stage of the child
- Speak at the child's level
- Validate the child's feelings
- Be honest, clear and as factual as possible

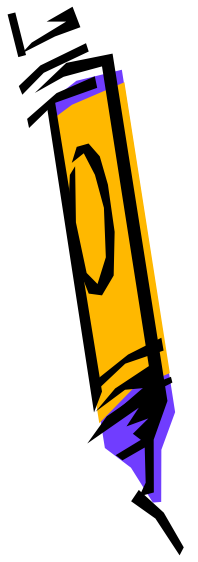


Listen well

- Read between the lines
- Show that you believe the child as well as believe in the child
- Explore fears
- Dispel fault
- Explore resources
- Encourage normal routines



# Resources



Material adapted from

- Johnson, Kendall (2006) *After the Storm: Healing After Trauma, Tragedy and Terror*
- Goldman, Linda, (2000) *Life and Loss, a guide to help grieving children*
- Wright, H. Norman and Oliver, Gary (1993) *Kids Have Feelings Too!*

