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Lesson 5

When Someone You Love Is Gone

TEACHER PREPARATION

KEY CONCEPTS

All students experience loss at some point in their lives.

It is important for students to realize that, unfortunately, various kinds of loss will be a part of everyone's life.

Students need to know they can learn from and overcome losses.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. understand loss is a part of life.
2. express a loss in their lives and the associated feelings.
3. learn how to empathize with others who have experienced loss.

KEY TERMS

Grief: deep sadness.

Loss: the experience of having something taken away.

Overcome: to successfully deal with or gain control of something difficult.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Teachers need to help children feel safe at a time when the world seems to be more dangerous. At some point in their lives, all children will experience loss of some kind. It may be the loss of a pet, a friend, a grandparent, a home, etc. They may experience the loss of security or life as they know it because of death, divorce or war. For many children, the guidance of a caring teacher can make the difference between them being completely overwhelmed or developing lifelong emotional and psychological coping skills.

As a teacher, you can help encourage a child's sense of security by knowing how to help children restore calm in their lives. Children who have suffered

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a loss might misbehave in class in a destructive manner. They might withdraw into themselves in isolation. Whatever their reaction may be to loss, they will need comfort, encouragement and direction from you. It is crucial to provide opportunities for children to discuss their concerns and fears and reveal their feelings about what is happening. It will be very helpful to your students for you to create and maintain a safe environment in the classroom for this to happen. It is also important to teach all students how to respond to those who have suffered a loss.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION

1. In **Discovering the Lesson, Activity 1** for **younger elementary students**, you will need a large piece of paper, paint or markers to create a tree. Small sheets of paper and crayons or markers can be used by the students to draw leaves.
2. During **Discovering the Lesson, Activity 2** for **younger elementary students**, and **Activity 1** for **older elementary students**, provide paper plates and markers or crayons, tape or glue. Optional: hole puncher and yarn or string.
3. Write the five sentences on the board before **Activity 2** begins in **Discovering the Lesson** for **older elementary students**. The students will need their journals.
4. Provide paper for letter writing in **Discovering the Lesson, Activity 3**.
5. For **Going Deeper**, draw the Five Dimensions of a Person on the board or a large paper.

LESSON

BEGINNING OF THE LESSON

[Say to the students:] In the last chapter Dugan, Trish and Hector found books they were interested in. They placed them on the table which began to vibrate and suddenly the books vanished. Let's see what happens next.

READINESS (5 minutes)

[Read to the students:] **Chapter 5 – The Map of Wonders**

“What do the lost need?” asked the voice from somewhere in the shadows.

“They need comfort, encouragement and, uh, direction,” rattled off Hector.

“They need to be found,” added Dugan.

“They need help,” summed up Trish.

“Is that what you need?” asked the voice.

“Are we lost?” asked Dugan.

“Seems so,” admitted Hector. “We’ve lost our way, we have lost our books, and while, according to the table, that may not make us losers, we’re still lost.”

“So, what do we really need?” pressed Trish. “We don’t seem to be in danger. We probably have enough resources in this library to answer just about any question that might come up — all we have to do is figure out which books answer the most important questions.”

“What are those questions?” asked the voice.

“I haven’t a clue,” remarked Dugan.

“Me, either,” echoed Trish.

“I am starting to get hungry,” offered Hector.

“Yeah, we need food,” answered Dugan expectantly. “‘When are we going to eat?’ is a great question!”

The table split open and reshaped itself again. But this time, when the movement stopped, there were drinks and bowls of fruit and nuts on the new square tabletop.

“All right! I want one of these for my room!” announced Dugan.

Trish sat a bowl of water and some food on the floor for their newly found four-legged friend. As she scratched its ear, she felt a collar and a dog tag. “Hey, our friend has a name!” exclaimed Trish. “It’s Edgar.”

“Dumb name for a dog,” mumbled Dugan under his breath.

“EDgrrrr!” laughed Hector, as the dog turned his head sideways at the sound of his name.

The three ate their fill and between bites the conversation drifted to the topic of “Why us?” Each one felt as if the library had chosen them — that it was not random chance that brought the three of them to the library on this day. Though no one said it out loud, each of them was thinking, “Why am I here?”

The tabletop moved a third time, expanding far beyond its original dimensions, and when it finished, a stunning gigantic map was ingrained in its surface. The colors were striking! The blue of the waters was richer than

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any ocean, names and places were written in gold and images of ancient wonders looked so real it would not have surprised any of them if the forms had begun to move.

“This is the Map of Wonders!” declared the voice in regal tones. “And this is why each of you has been summoned. Our world is entering into a long night of confusion and cruelty. Old safeguards are passing away. Honor and virtue are pressed by a new darkness with powerful allies bent on destroying all that is noble and worth saving in your lives.”

As the three friends watched, portions of the Map of Wonders grew brighter and then dimmed. With the illumination of each portion of the map, a part of the library glowed as well. Their sight became sharper as subtleties focused into identifiable objects.

“Here’s our table and the three of us!” exclaimed Trish as she pointed to a place on the map off to one side.

“I don’t think you are lost any more, do you?” said the voice.

EXPLORE (20 minutes)

[Say to the students:] **The Librarian told the children dark times were coming, but yet it seemed within the darkness, there was always some light. This is a lot like our lives. Everyone has a dark time, a hard time, a time when they have lost something or someone dear to them. It can be a very painful and confusing time. It can make you feel sad or angry or confused. These feelings are normal and appropriate. Today, we are going to think about a time when we lost something or someone we loved.**

[Begin by telling about a time in your life when you lost someone or something. Talk about the feelings you had at the time. Then share a happy memory about the person or thing. These stories are wonderful opportunities for your students to feel close to you as you share. Lead your students in a discussion of the following three topics. Be sensitive to the fact not everyone may want to share.]

You may want to discuss the following questions in small groups and then allow one student from each small group to share with the class.]

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[Say to your students:]

1. **Share about a loss in your life. It could be a pet, a friend, a person, your home, etc.**
2. **How did you feel when this happened?**
3. **Share one of your favorite memories about the person or thing you lost.**

DISCOVER (20 minutes)

*[After the time of sharing their thoughts and feelings about a loss, it is important for you to guide the students to positive memories of their time **before** loss. Here are some activities to help students remember their loss in a positive way, as a part of life.]*

[Say to the students:] **We have shared some of our thoughts and feelings about things or people we have lost. We have also shared good memories. It is important to remember the good. We are going to make reminders for ourselves and others of the good memories we have of these people or things.**

For Younger Elementary Students

Activity 1: Memory Tree

[Paint or draw a picture of a tree with beautiful branches on a large piece of paper. Each student will make a leaf for the tree with the name of the person they want to remember or the thing they want to remember. They can color their leaf and place it on the tree with tape or glue.]

Activity 2: *[On a small paper plate, the student may glue a photo or draw a picture of the person or thing which was lost. Let them decorate the plate with markers, colored pencils or crayons. They can add stickers or other decorations to the plate. If possible, punch two holes near the top of the plate and put string or yarn through the holes to make a plate hanger.]*

For Older Elementary Students

Activity 1: *[Students will either bring a photo of the person or thing they lost or draw a picture of the person or thing on a paper plate. Leave space around the edge of the picture to write descriptive words about the person*

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or thing in the picture. They can add decorative symbols, stickers, etc. to remind them of the person or thing.]

Activity 2: Finish the Sentence

[Write these sentences on the board and have the students write the sentences in their journals and fill in the blanks.]

1. I really miss _____ when _____
2. My happiest memory is _____
3. I feel _____ when I think of _____
4. I remember _____ about _____
5. I smile when I remember _____

Activity 3: *[Say to the students:]* **Write a letter to a friend or family member about the person or thing you lost. Be descriptive and remember to share your favorite memories.**

SHARE (10 minutes)

[Say to the students:] **We have shared many feelings about loss in our lives. We have told how we felt when these things happened to us. How can you be a good friend to someone who has lost something or someone they loved?** *[Write the students' answers on the board.]* **Let's write a note to a friend who has lost something or someone. What could you say?** *[Write the comments students share on the board as examples.]*

For Younger Elementary Students

[Students can take their memory plates home and share with their parents a good memory. If they wrote a letter, they can give it to their friend who experienced a loss.]

For Older Elementary Students

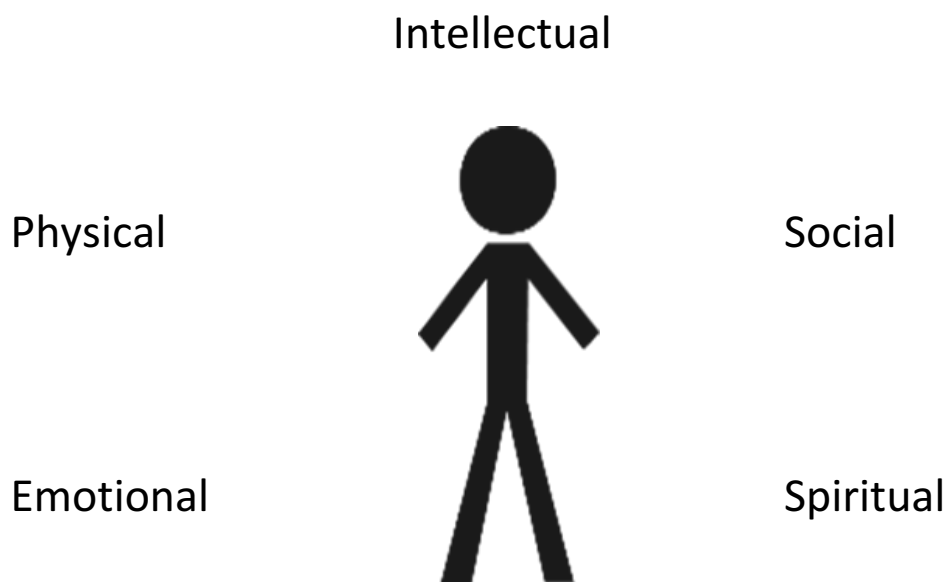
*[Students can **Think/Pair/Share** their memory plates or their letter with someone in their class about the person or thing they lost. Then, they can take their plates home to share with their parents and deliver their letter to their friend who lost someone or something.]*

ENDING THE LESSON

[Say to the students:] We have shared about some hard times everyone goes through in life. It is good to remember and share our thoughts and feelings about people and things we have lost. It is also very important we celebrate and remember the good memories we have in our hearts. We can overcome the darkness of losing someone with the light of good memories. It is important to understand how others feel when they have a loss in their life. It helps to say encouraging words to them.

GOING DEEPER (optional)

We are going to be talking about the **Five Dimensions of a Person** today.



Intellectual: Our minds — the part of us that thinks, learns and solves things (like puzzles or mysteries).

Physical: Our bodies — the parts of us others can see and the feelings we have inside our bodies (being hungry, tired, having a headache, etc.)

Social: Our relationships — how we get along with other people, our family, our friends, the teachers and classmates at school, etc.

Emotional: Our feelings — happy, excited, sad, angry, bored, etc.

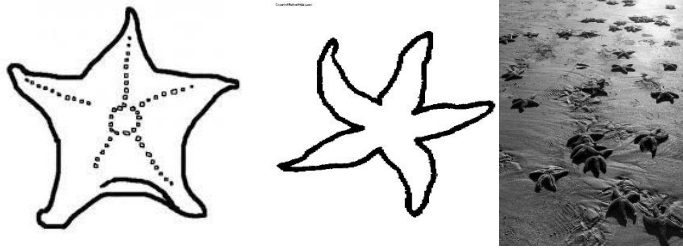
Spiritual: Our souls — the part of us that wonders about, seeks for and may experience God and things beyond the world we can see and touch.

This **Going Deeper** will quote two sayings from the book of Psalms, a collection of ancient Hebrew songs. Hebrews call their Bible the *Biblia Hebraica*, or Hebrew Bible. It includes the same books, although not in the same order or by all the same names, as the Christian Old Testament.

[Say to the students:] **Today, we are going to continue our discussion about what happens to us when we have loss in our lives and how to handle loss in a better way.**

For Younger Elementary Students

[If possible, reproduce the photograph below of starfish on a beach (preferably a large copy) or copy one of the drawings onto the board.]



[Read to your students:] **John was walking along a beach covered with starfish.** *[If available, show the photo of starfish on the beach. If not, show the drawing of a starfish. Resume the story:]* **Soon John saw his friend, Mary. She was picking up starfish, one by one, running to the edge of the waves, and throwing them as far as she could into the water. John called to her, “Mary, what are you doing?” “I’m throwing starfish back into the sea,” Mary replied. “I can see that,” said John, “but why are you doing it?” “Starfish can’t live outside of water,” she said. “I’m saving them.” John shook his head. “That’s silly! There are hundreds of starfish on this beach, maybe thousands. You’ll never save them all.” Mary held up the starfish in her hand. “I can save this one.” Then she smiled, ran toward the waves and threw the starfish far out into the water.**

[Ask your students:] **What did Mary mean when she said, “I can save this one?”** *[Let one or more students answer.]* **There is an even more important point to this story. You may never have a chance to save some starfish, but each of you can help a friend, classmate or family member when they are hurting.**

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Let's review what we learned in the lesson and I'll write your answers on the board. What are some things we can do or say when someone has had a loss or is hurting? *[Accept the answers students give. Whatever they answer, be ready to add some ideas of your own, such as:*

- *Make friends with a student who is new to our school and doesn't know anyone.*
- *If your brother or sister is sick, ask if you can do their chores for them until they are well, etc.]*

For Older Elementary Students

[Say to the students:] Earlier in the lesson, you shared about a time when you experienced a loss of something or of a person. I would like for you to think whether there was anyone who helped you or made you feel better in the situation such as a friend, a parent, a sister or brother or anyone else. If there was, I would like for you to Think/Pair/Share with your neighbor and explain what they said or did to help you feel better. If there was no one who helped you deal with the loss, then tell what you *wish* someone had done with or for you to help you handle the problem or loss.

[When students have had time to share in their groups, say to them:] **Would a few of you be willing to share with the whole class what someone did or said to help or your ideas of what you wish someone had done?** *[As students share, write a brief summary of each idea on the board. Guide their thoughts so you can include some appropriate suggestions of how to help others in a time of loss.]*

[Say to the students:] These are excellent approaches to helping someone who is hurting. Now, I'd like to ask for two volunteers to help with a role play in front of the class.

[Have the two students stand where everyone can see and hear them. Assign one to be the person who is hurting or has lost something and the other to be the helper or comforter. Tell the comforter to choose one of the good ideas from the board or make up their own.] If you are not confident the "hurting" student will come up with a realistic or meaningful loss, you can assign him or her to role play a loss you choose. After the role play,

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have everyone clap for the two role-players and say to the students:] It isn't easy to think of what to say when you are up here in front of everyone. It's much easier when you are sitting and listening. What other ideas do you have of what the "comforter" could have said or done?" [Add any additional answers to the list you began on the board as your students answer.]

[Say to the students:] Please take out your journals (or paper). I want each of you to take a few minutes to write down a name of someone you know who has suffered a loss or might be hurting for some reason. You won't have to show what you've written to me or anyone else.

Now, after the person's name, I want you to briefly write what you might be able to do or say to help this person. You may want to think through the ideas on the board or come up with your own. When you've finished writing, please raise your hand so I'll be able to tell when everyone is finished.

Introducing the spiritual dimension of life (all ages):

[Show the "Dimensions of a Person" diagram. Ask various students to define each of the five words. With younger students, you may have to define the five words for them. Say to the students:] Most people around the world believe in some kind of god, or that there is something beyond our everyday physical world. [This has also been true for nearly every culture throughout history.] Many people find an ancient book of wisdom called Psalms to be a great comfort and encouragement. These are poems, many written by King David in the ancient land of the Hebrews. David himself experienced suffering and loss, including the death of his baby son. When David suffered loss, he turned to the God of the Bible and found strength and comfort there. And many people have found strength in David's words ever since.

[Read these two Psalms excerpts:]

"The Lord is near to those who are discouraged; he saves those who have lost all hope" (Psalm 34:18, Good News Translation).

"He heals the broken-hearted and bandages their wounds" (Psalm 147:3, Good News Translation).

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[Say to the students:] **What do you think King David meant when he said, “The Lord is near to those who are discouraged.”** *[Let one or more students answer.]* **What about God saving those who’ve lost hope? How might God do that?**

[Continue to ask students about the phrases in the second excerpt from Psalms. Remember, your job is not to teach the students what to believe about God or the Bible. Rather, you are helping them explore the spiritual dimension of life and how it might help them deal with pain and loss.]

PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

This week, the lesson was about how hard it is to suffer the loss of someone or something important in our lives.

Questions you might ask your child:

1. Can you tell me the story your teacher read? Can you describe the Map of Wonders? (A table in the library magically turned into a huge “Map of Wonders.”)
2. Ask your child about a loss he or she might sometimes cry about. (If your child tells you about a loss, it is important you listen well and provide a sense of security for your child by listening to the whole experience and asking about your child’s feelings.)
3. Can you think of anything you learned from the loss you experienced? (After your child tells you what he or she learned, or didn’t learn, describe some memories about a person or thing you may have lost. You might also share how you helped friends when they experienced loss.)

