

The Big Energy of Grief

At Camp Erin and in our family grief group In This Together (formally known as Me, Too) we talk a lot about the big energy of grief and the importance of providing opportunities for children, teens and adults to express this big energy. During this time when many of us are staying close to home and have less opportunities to engage with people and places in the ways we're used to it can be even more important to find healthy ways to express this energy and move our bodies in the space we have.

What is Big Energy:

The death of someone close can jar us as if by a sudden, sharp blow. The impact of the loss and “goneness” of the person can feel like an earthquake inside our bodies. The bigness of the blow generates in our bodies a surge to come to meet it. This surge of energy we call the big energy of grief.

Explaining Big Energy to kids:

Sometimes our grief can be an emotion or feeling, like sadness, confusion, or anger. Sometimes it can cause us to feel out of control and scared. Our grief can also be physical and we may feel it in our bodies, like being antsy, bouncy, fidgety, or tense.

Sometimes our grief can feel like a stomachache, headache, shakiness, or excitement. Sometimes kids of all ages even have things happen to them that they haven't had happen in years – like they have accidents in bed at night or they don't like to sleep alone anymore.

Sometimes kids and adults have even more energy than they usually do and they want to MOVE!!

Our grief can look or feel like silliness, playfulness, and movement.

These feelings and experiences can cause us to have a lot of energy and movement, and sometimes they can leave us feeling tired, angry, and grumpy. We call these feelings the “Big Energy” of grief. Big Energy is normal and okay! It can also be a very safe and healthy experience when you let the Big Energy out in a safe way.

What to do with the Big Energy of Grief:

- eat regularly.
- sleep regularly.
- exercise. . . walk, run, work out, play team sports, do individual sports, etc.
- cry alone and/or with friends.
- laugh, do things that are fun.
- yell, throw balls or pillows at a wall. Twist or yell into a big energy pillow; hit the pillow with your fists; tear paper; make up your own big energy exercise.
- make a place in your home that is a big energy place. Fill it with soft pillows and soft things to lay on and to throw. Go there when you need to have a “release fit.”
- paint, dance, listen to or play music, sing, write, sculpt.
- be kind to yourself.
- be aware that your fatigue is not laziness, but the result of the big energy of grief going on inside.
- if the big energy of grief is causing harm to yourself or to others, call for professional help. A counselor will help guide you to ways to express this energy that is safe.

Opportunities to connect with your child/teen – discussion questions:

- What are some feelings have you had since your people or person died?
- How have you felt or noticed grief in your body? What has your body felt like lately?
- What are some ways you feel and let out your Big Energy?

Review the above suggestions of what to do with big energy and find a place in your home where big energy can be expressed. Let your child/teen know where it is okay to express their energy and what is appropriate for inside vs. outside. Be creative about how to use the space you have. Jumping up and down, dancing to get the wiggles out and tearing up paper don't require a large space. Running around a backyard or in a park, jumping rope or kicking/throwing a ball can be good uses of outdoor space if you have access to it.