

A Resource Sheet for Grieving Children, Teens, and Families

Father's Day can be hard on families who are missing their dad. Reminders seem to be everywhere—on social media, in the store, hearing friends and family making plans for the special day. Families grieving the loss of their dad have permission to spend the day in whatever way makes most sense to them. This might mean doing special activities or rituals that help them to feel close and connected to Dad, practicing coping skills to manage difficult feelings that might come up, or simply trying to treat the day like any other day.

It can be helpful for family members to create a plan together about how they will spend Father's Day. It's OK if the plan looks different for each member of the family. It's also OK to have mixed feelings about Dad and Dad's death. There may be things about Dad that family members miss terribly and things they don't miss. Family members have the right to feel however they feel.

Below are some ideas you may choose to incorporate this Father's Day. You will also find a template you can use to write your family's plan for Father's Day. Think about your plan as a family and write it out in advance of Father's Day so you know what to expect when the day arrives.

Ways to Connect to Dad's Memory

- Eat a meal or a favorite food Dad loved. You might try cooking it together, or order in! Choose whatever works for your family.
- Watch Dad's favorite movie or TV show.
- Play Dad's favorite board game, sport, or video game.
- Take turns sharing memories about Dad. It's OK to bring up difficult memories. For ideas about special memories to share, check out our memory sharing prompts later in this resource sheet.
- Look at photos or videos of Dad.
- Create a memory box, photo album, or scrapbook.
- Write a letter, send an email, or create a drawing to Dad. You can share these with each other or keep them private. Feel free to use the letter template later in this resource sheet.
- Plant something outside honoring Dad—a flower, a tree, or a vegetable.
- Sing a song for Dad or listen to music Dad loved.
- Have a dance party honoring Dad.



Preparing for Father's Day

Ways to Take Care of Yourself and Each Other

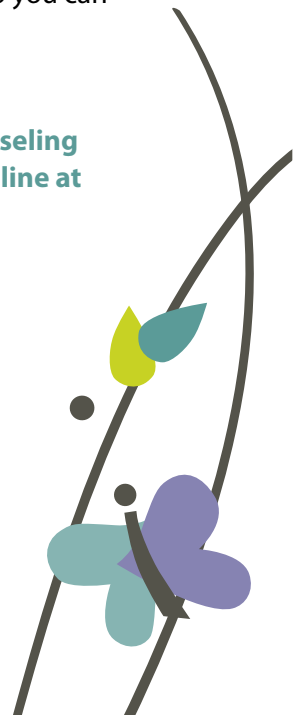
- Create an encouragement jar for the whole family. [Instructions](#) | [Video](#)
- Decorate a family shield to show what keeps your family strong. [Instructions](#)
- Create permission slips to help you respond to big feelings. [Instructions](#) | [Video](#)
- Practice grounding activities to help you find a sense of calm. [Instructions](#) | [Video](#)
- Go on a fun scavenger hunt. [Instructions](#)
- Create a calming jar to help you relax. [Instructions](#) | [Video](#)

Ways to Talk to Other People About Father's Day

It's important to be prepared for how other people will treat you and talk to you on Father's Day. Some friends or family members may reach out to check in on you and some may not. Sometimes you may want to talk openly about your dad and sometimes you don't. Whatever you're feeling is just fine. If there is a person you want to connect and commiserate with about your experience on Father's Day, think about how you can reach out to them and communicate your own needs. Consider saying, "I'd really like to talk to you about my dad today. Could we video chat?"

Or if people reach out to you and you do not feel like talking, that is also OK. How could you communicate that to them? "Today feels really hard for me and I don't want to talk about anything right now" is a way to openly express your feelings. Even strangers in public spaces may wish you a "Happy Father's Day!" or ask you how your Father's Day is going. It is helpful to consider how that might affect you ahead of time and have a plan for what would feel comfortable for you to say in return. It's OK to have to say a quick "OK!" or "Thanks." Or if you'd like to be open and honest you could say, "Today is very difficult for me because my dad died." Remember that there is no right or wrong way to respond. We encourage you to discuss this with your family and we have included a plan so you can write it down ahead of time.

Know that you are not alone. Reach out for support when you need it. If you need grief counseling support, call Transitions GriefCare at 919.719.7199. You can also find additional resources online at transitionslifecare.org/grief-care.





I Miss You

I miss you visiting favorite places
I miss you going to new spaces

I miss you late into the night
I miss you at dawn's first light

I miss you when sadness is around
I miss you when joy is found

I miss you when the lights come on
I miss you when the day is done

I miss you on your special day
I miss you like it was yesterday

I miss you at no special time
I miss you today with every rhyme.

Tanya Lord (thegriefftoolbox.com)



Our Family Plan for Father's Day

Time of Day	What we would like to do

Things we don't want to do on Father's Day



Our Plan for Self Care

Family Member	Things that will help me with feelings on Father's Day

What I would like to say if people ask me about Father's Day

Family Member	What I will say to others

Dear _____

It's been _____ since you died. If you were here, I would tell you _____

And you would tell me _____

I am so proud that I've _____

I know you would want me to _____

I will never forget you. My favorite way to remember you is _____

If grief has taught me anything, it's _____

Thank you for _____

Love, _____



Conversation Prompts

Here are some conversation prompts to share memories about Dad. You might cut them out and take turns selecting one to share, or toss a coin and see where it lands!

Share a food that reminds you of Dad.	Share an activity you enjoyed doing with Dad.	Share the ways you are like Dad.
Share a way Dad made you laugh.	Share a favorite holiday you spent with Dad.	Share something important you learned from Dad.
Share the things you do to feel close and connected to Dad.	Share a smell that reminds you of Dad.	Share a memory of Dad.
Share an object or item that makes you think of Dad.	Share Dad's favorite pastime or hobby.	Share some things Dad was good at.
Share Dad's favorite colors.	Share the things Dad loved about you.	Share a place that helps you to feel close to Dad.