

Grieving Together

“Grief is like an ocean; it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim” (Vicki Harrison). Grieving children, teens, and young adults need emotional support and guidance, especially now that we are experiencing loss due to COVID-19.

Unfortunately, over half of Americans are grieving. (Eterneva) “A death by COVID-19 can be complicated. The natural grief processes can be compromised in cases where safety guidelines or other circumstances have prevented family members from physically saying goodbye to their loved one,” said Jessica’s House executive director, Erin Nelson. Although local children are grieving a lost parent, sibling, or friend, Jessica’s House, located in Turlock, is promoting inner peace for grieving children and helping them cope with loss.

Jessica’s House, a local nonprofit organization founded in 2012, provides a safe space where grieving children, teens, and young adults learn to cope with their feelings and emotions. (Valine) Due to COVID-19, Jessica’s House has adapted to new social guidelines, and grief sessions are now being held online. (Jessica’s House) Every other week, grief sessions are held in groups where participants talk about the person they lost, complete therapeutic art projects, and engage in other activities. These groups are open to ages three to twenty-five and are broken into five categories based on the type of loss experienced. (Gonzales) The categories include parent, sibling, suicide, homicide, and COVID-19 loss, which was recently created. Also, monthly groups are held for grandparent, and stillbirth and pregnancy loss. (Jessica’s House)

Jessica's House is essential for grieving children. As of 2019, 1,097 children, teens, young adults, and their families engaged in grief counseling through Jessica's House. In addition, Jessica's House has provided sixty-five community organizations and schools with grief training classes, and 131 people from the community have volunteered to help change lives. (Jessica's House) The staff at Jessica's House knows it is necessary to grieve together, and without support and guidance, many individuals would continue to struggle with their grief in unhealthy ways.

Jessica's House has touched many lives, but one person was particularly blessed by their work. Four-year-old Audrey discovered her dad, dead. She thought he was sleeping but he had, unfortunately, passed away in his sleep from heartbeat irregularity. You feel like you're going to die," Audrey's mom, Gloria, said. "You feel like you're just not going to get up the next day." Though Audrey's heart was broken, she was able to connect with other grieving children through Jessica's House. She benefited from knowing she was not alone in her grief and participating in support groups where she could share about her dad while making friends. (Jessica's House)

Jessica's House has given many children and teens relief and inner peace from grieving the loss of a loved one. While it is important to support Jessica's House and the work they do, we also need to stand by those who have lost a loved one and show compassion and sympathy. Peace is being promoted through Jessica's House by emotionally supporting children and teens who have lost loved ones.

Word Count: 524 words

Works Cited

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