



Helping Children with Loss - Program Overview

The Helping Children with Loss (HCWL) program, using the book “When Children Grieve,” by John W. James, Russell Friedman, and Leslie Landon Matthews, is based upon the general principles of the Grief Recovery Method, (GRM) which is an evidence-based program to help grievers achieve recovery from the grief they experience.

The HCWL program defines the broad extent and commonality of grief

Grief is the normal and natural emotional response to change or loss of any kind – death, divorce, moving, health changes, relationship changes and more. Grief is also the result of unmet hopes, dreams and expectations and the loss of intangible concepts such as safety, trust, respect, faith... and hope. Grief is universal. All of us have experienced grief throughout our lives, as a result of many changes and losses. These losses begin in childhood – when we move from one home to another, when our parents go through divorce, when a pet dies, when a first love doesn’t work out, or when we experience abuse or neglect from someone we expect to love and care for us. The HCWL program teaches adults how to help their children or the children in their care, talk about their losses and to give voice to the feelings they experience. Adults learn how to help their children identify and give voice to undelivered communications they need to make to take the actions necessary to begin the recovery process.

The HCWL program explains why we are so ill prepared to recover from our grief, given that it is so universal and a normal and natural response to a variety of changes and losses.

Just as our grief is universal, the ineffective ways of dealing with it are also universal. These old, ineffective tools are “taught” in childhood unless the adults in our lives learn new – more effective tools. Often, the way we manage our grief is similar to the ways our parents and other key figures in our lives managed theirs. In fact, sometimes these ineffective ways perpetuate for generations. In addition to parents and key family members, we also learn ineffective tools for dealing with grief from other key adults in as we grow up – teachers, clergy, coaches, counselors, the media, and tv and music personalities. When we learn more effective ways to recover from grief – we can then share and model those for the children in our lives.

How does the HCWL program help teach recovery skills?

The HCWL program is based on the GRM, which is just that – a method – a step by step process – an “action program” - for identifying and respecting the emotional experience of one’s grief – both the immediate or presenting grief issue – and those that may have been holding us captive for years. By learning, modeling and teaching new, more effective, ways of responding to our grief, we can help the children in our lives learn these tools at a younger age – resulting in less pent-up grief over the years to come.

The four sessions in the HCWL program are based on the GRM model. These sessions include 1) discussion of the old, ineffective ways we’ve learned to grieve; 2) learning how to recognize the impact of grief in children’s lives and how to be a more active listener; 3) learning to identify sources of emotional energy children experience around grief events; and 4) identifying appropriate ways to give voice to important discoveries about the grief they experience. At every step the grieving child is respected, listened to and heard without

judgement or analysis. They are supported in identifying and giving voice to the emotions they experience. The tools provided can be used throughout their lifetime, to address other losses, and to help more quickly address new losses.

What is the HCWL process like – how is it different from other grief support programs?

- . HCWL is for adults - parents and family, teachers, coaches, counselors, youth pastors, juvenile justice staff, daycare providers and others who have, love or work with children/youth.
- . HCWL is an action-based program that involves reading and writing assignments as outlined in “When Children Grieve.” HCWL has been shared for over 20 years, on six of seven continents, with the book having been translated into several other languages over those years.
- . HCWL is a 4-session program, for a total of ten hours, developed to be presented in both small group and one/one formats, both in person or online. HCWL is not a “drop in” group, with each session building on previous sessions. All four sessions must be completed.
- . HCWL is facilitated by a Grief Recovery Method Specialist, certified by the Grief Recovery Institute. These Specialists, are trained to deliver HCWL, and have experience in working with a variety of types of loss, and people from all walks of life. Each of our Specialists has a deep desire to help grieving children.
- . HCWL is based on the GRM, an evidence-based program, having documented statistically significant improvements in griever’s knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to grief. More information on the research can be found [here](http://www.griefrecoverymethod.com/evidence-based) at www.griefrecoverymethod.com/evidence-based.

How can I learn more about HCWL or about becoming a Specialist?

The first step is to [visit our website](http://www.griefrecoverymethod.com/our-programs/helping-children-loss) at www.griefrecoverymethod.com/our-programs/helping-children-loss . You can also visit the online directory to find a Grief Recovery Method Specialist near you, with whom you might work through the program. You are welcome to call the Grief Recovery Institute for additional information – as a griever or a person seeking to help others recover from their grief. Call us at 800-334-7606.

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