



# Activity: How Grief Shows Up in the Body

## Objective

Grief is more than just feeling sad. It can affect every part of who we are, and often shows up in our bodies in ways we do not expect. This activity normalizes common physical reactions to grief and encourages youth to build awareness about the ways in which they may be experiencing grief now and in the future.



## Instructions

This activity could be facilitated by labeling three areas of a room with the words, "Never," "Sometimes," and "Always." The facilitator would then list common physical grief reactions and encourage participants to move to the space that describes their personal experience with that reaction. For example, the facilitator might say, "Stomach aches," and participants would choose if they never, sometimes, or always experience that reaction.

Another way to facilitate this activity would be to have each participant label 3 notecards, one with each word, "Never," "Sometimes," and "Always." As the facilitator lists common physical grief reactions, youth would hold up the word that best describes their experience with that reaction.

## Supplies

- Three pieces of paper labeled, "Never," "Sometimes," and "Always."
- Or, three small notecards per participating youth.
- List of common physical grief reactions (included on next page)

## Additional ideas

Following this activity, consider introducing mindfulness techniques that will support youth in coping with common physical reactions of grief.

*Thank you, Kelly Petersohn, from Camp Erin Online for developing & sharing this activity!*

# Common Physical Grief Reactions

- crying
- eating more
- eating less
- sleeping more
- sleeping less
- fear of sleeping alone
- nightmares
- tired/fatigued
- low energy
- tense muscles
- stomach aches
- headaches
- weight changes
- regressive behavior-  
thumb sucking, baby  
talk, bedwetting, clingy
- agitation/irritability
- short of breath
- rapid heart rate
- throat tightness
- exercising more
- leg tremble/tap
- staying busy
- fidgety
- recklessness
- self harm
- seeking comfort

