CAMP ERIN

PART OF THE ELUNA NETWORK

YOU CAN DO THIS:

A GUIDE TO STARTING GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS FOR KIDS AND TEENS



eluna

THE CIGNA GROUP FOUNDATION

Supported by The Cigna Group Foundation, a private foundation that supports organizations sharing its commitment to improve the health and vitality of individuals and the communities. The views presented here are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Cigna Group Foundation or its directors, officers, or staff.



Sarah Behm Guillén, PPS, MBA

Director, Eluna Resource Center
SarahGuillen@elunanetwork.org



Kelly Petersohn, LCSW

Camp Erin Online Programs Manager
KellyPetersohn@elunanetwork.org

eluna

WE SEE YOU.









You are our heroes!

The everyday connections that you are making with kids and teens are life-changing!

Thank you for being here.

We know your days and “to-do” lists are already as full as your hands and hearts.

You Can Do This!

You bring the BIG HEART and COMPASSIONATE PRESENCE.
We’ll bring the grief-informed practices and simple activities.

eluna

A Guide to Starting Grief Support Groups for Kids & Teens

01

Simple Ways to Make a Profound Difference

02

Grief Group logistics, structure, and activities

03

You are not alone: Free Resources for you!

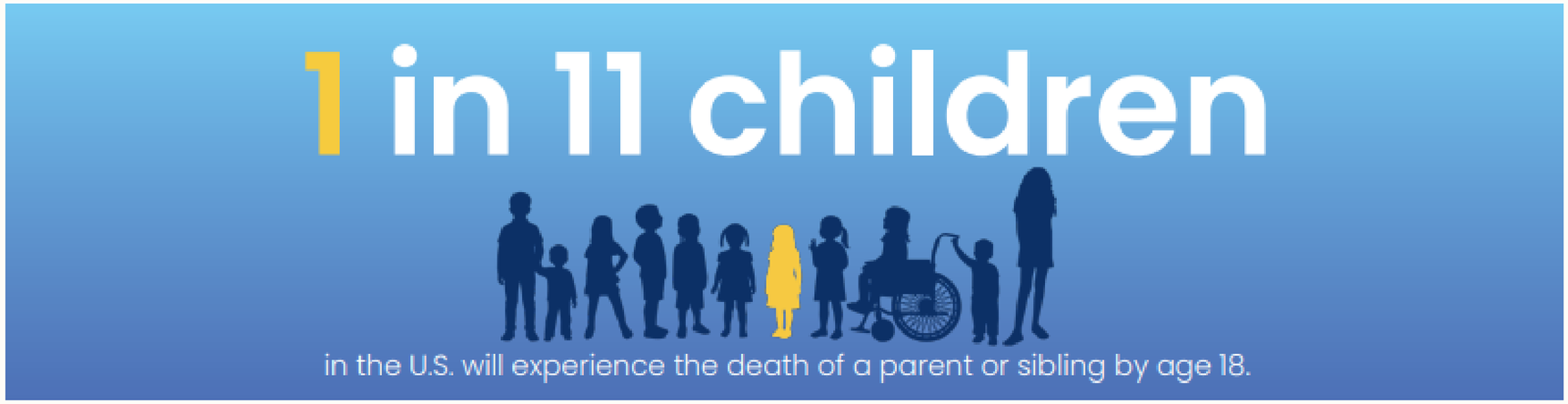
eluna

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the need for grief groups in your community?



eluna

YOUTH BEREAVEMENT PREVALENCY



CHECK IT OUT

CBEM®
CHILDHOOD BEREAVEMENT ESTIMATION MODEL

Judi's House (2025), CBEM Dashboard, cbem.judishouse.org

eluna



On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable would you feel starting a grief support group for youth in your community?

eluna



ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT & IMPACTFUL CHILDHOOD GRIEF PROTECTIVE FACTORS IS THE PRESENCE OF

A CARING, TRUSTED, GRIEF-INFORMED ALLY.

eluna



GRIEF IS NATURAL

Grief is the natural response to experiencing the death of someone close.

It is not a diagnosis or a problem to be solved or fixed.

eluna



GRIEF IS UNIQUE

Every person experiences grief differently.

Grief impacts the whole person. It is more than just feelings of sadness.

eluna



GRIEF CHANGES

There is not a set timeline or order of stages to move through.

Grief is not something we get over. It is something that changes over time that we learn to live with and grow around.

eluna

GRIEF RESPONSES

Emotional

outbursts, fluctuation, irritability, regret/guilt, feeling crazy

Physical

eating & sleeping changes, somatic complaints, difficulty sitting still

Cognitive

forgetful, unfocused, decline in academics

Social

withdrawn, isolation, discord with peers, change in peer group

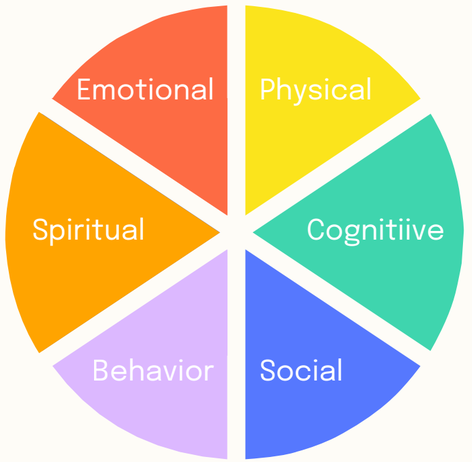
Behavior

lack of interest/ participation in typical activities, regression

Spiritual

questions, peace, refusal to participate

GRIEF impacts the Whole Person!



eluna

REFERENCE TIP CARD



Validate:

Grief is natural, unique, & changes over time.

Remember:

Release the pressure.
Follow their lead.
Compassionate curiosity.
Two ears. One mouth.

Important phrases:

“How’s your heart today?“

“I wonder....”

“It makes sense that you might feel that way.”

Teach me about how your grief has been showing up lately.

eluna

WHEN TO SEEK ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

- **Total** denial of the reality of the death
- **Persistent** panic or fear
- Substance use/misuse
- Risk-taking behaviors
- **Chronic** apathy, depression, hostility
- **Prolonged** physical complaints with no medical cause
- **Prolonged** feelings of guilt or responsibility for death
- **Prolonged** concerning behavior (bed-wetting, fighting, withdrawn)
- **Prolonged**, unhealthy changes in eating, sleeping, hygiene behaviors
- Talk of or harm to self or others (suicidal ideation/attempts, self-harm)

We can also normalize the desire to have professional counseling as a healthy grief outlet.

Important: While it is natural for a person to think about death and dying and to have a strong desire to be with the person who died, be alert to a child who seems to think about death constantly or shares thoughts of or a plan for suicide. This is particularly important for a child or teen who is remembering someone who died by suicide.

eluna

PREPARING YOUR GROUP

- Consider a co-facilitator if possible
- Community education and engagement
- Establish purpose and developmental age/stage of group
- Caring for yourself including supervision or peer consultation
- Staying connected to resources and expanding your community. (NACG, National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement, Eluna)

eluna

FORMING YOUR GROUP

- Create a referral process & identify referral sources
- 1:1 Intake screenings with youth to gauge group readiness
- Group Composition (Elem 5-7 participants, Middle/High 7-9)
- Family Resources
- Consent & application forms

eluna

CONSENT AND APPLICATION

- Include purpose and expectations of group
- Parent/Guardian consent to participate
- Contact information for youth and parent/guardian



Important Questions:

- Who is the youth remembering?
- What did they call this person?
- Was this person a primary caregiver?
- Cause of Death
- Does the child know the details regarding the cause of death?
- Was there an end of life celebration/service? Did the youth participate?
- Physical, cognitive, social, or mental health considerations
- Grief related family customs/cultural aspects

eluna

GROUP LOGISTICS



Scheduling considerations



Duration recommendation of 45 - 60min



Confidential, comfortable, & consistent location



Setting group expectations



Managing group dynamics

eluna

GROUP SESSIONS



Eight to ten sessions recommended



Include opening and closing rituals



Incorporate relationship building activities



Set themes for each group, such as:

- **My Self**
- **My Story**
- **My Grief**
- **My Thoughts, Feelings, Questions**
- **My Memories**
- **My Coping**
- **My Connection**
- **My Progress**

eluna

REFERRAL SOURCES

- Parents/Caregivers
- School Counselor/Guidance Counselor
- School Social Worker/Resource
- Front Office/Attendance
- Nurse
- Coaches
- Wellness Survey
- Information Flyer

IDEAL STRUCTURE

- Elementary: 5-7
- Middle/High School: 7-9
- 8 weeks, 1 hour group session
- Consistent, confidential meeting space



GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP GUIDE

- Meet 1:1 prior to first group session
- 8 Consecutive Weeks
- Consistent Day, Time, Location
- Open and Close Rituals
- Topic-Based Themes
  - My Self
  - My Story
  - My Grief
  - My Thoughts, Feelings, Questions
  - My Memories
  - My Coping
  - My Connection
  - My Progress



WEEK 1: MY SELF

- **Goal: Get to know ourselves and one another by sharing likes, dislikes, hobbies, strengths, and goals.**
- Rules/Expectations: Safety First, Be Respectful, Have Fun
- Activities:
  - Web Game*
  - Thumb Ball*
  - Peer Interviews
  - Never Have I Ever
- Considerations:
  - Does your group need to move?
  - Are they more reserved?
  - Do they need a smaller entry with just 1:1?





eluna

WEEK 2: MY STORY

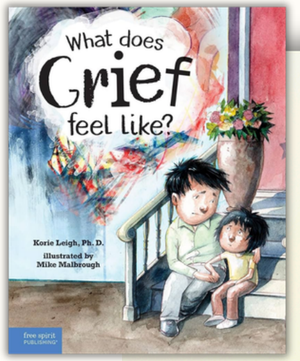
- **Goal: Consider the opportunity to put words to experiences related to the death of the person we are remembering.**
- Activity:
  - Story Starters*
  - Story Sharing*
  - Memory Board
- Considerations:
  - Age, communication skills, and preferences
  - Independent or as a group
  - Recognize that some might not know details
  - Intentionally select who will share first

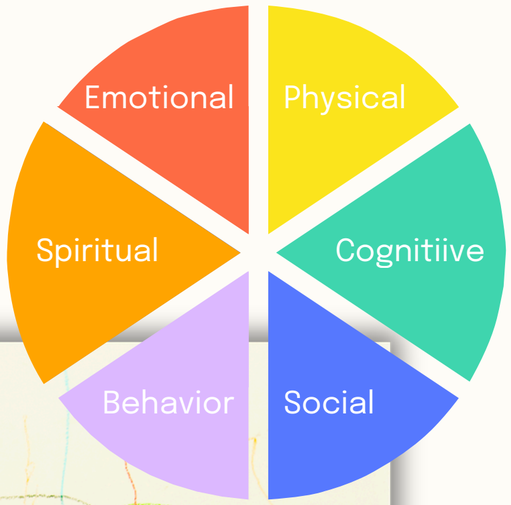


eluna

WEEK 3: MY GRIEF

- **Goal: Explore “What is grief?” and the unique ways it impacts every part of our lives.**
- Activity
  - Your Grief is Unique*
  - Grief Puzzle*
  - Grief and My Body*
  - How Grief Shows up in the Body*
  - This is What My Grief Feels Like
- Considerations:
  - Assess what they know
  - Highlight the misconceptions, unknowns, and untruths
  - Abstract thinking

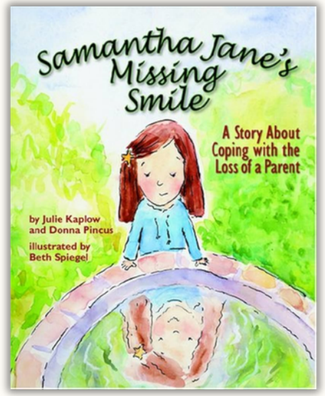




eluna

WEEK 4: MY THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, QUESTIONS

- **Goal: Identify big thoughts, feelings, and questions that can complicate and/or intensify the grief experience.**
- Activities
  - Mask*
  - Inside Outside Bag*
  - Anger Iceberg
  - Unfinished Business
- Considerations:
  - What themes are showing up?
    Anger, guilt, regret, masked emotion
  - Typically more independent
    vs group sharing



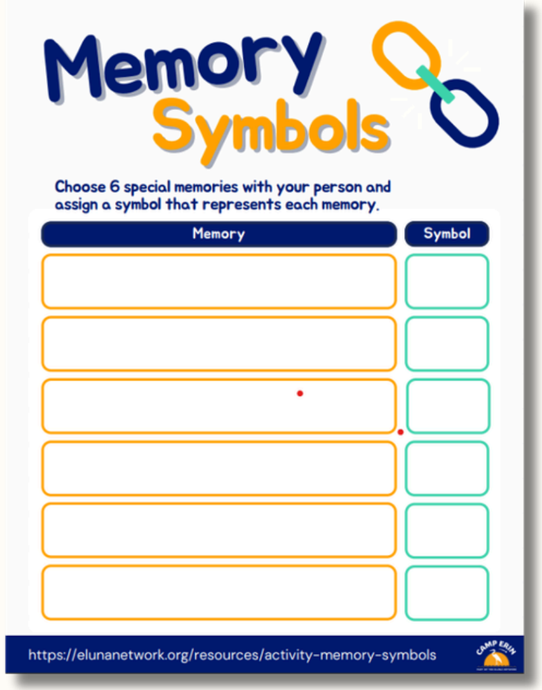


eluna

WEEK 5: MY MEMORIES

- **Goal: Reminisce and capture special memories shared with the person we are remembering.**
- Activity
  - Symbols Collage*
  - These Things Remind Me of You
  - Memory Beads*
  - Memory Jar*
- Considerations:
  - Common fear of memories fading
  - The more we think about, talk about, and remember - the more easily memories are to recall
  - Some may not have memories, others might not have positive memories



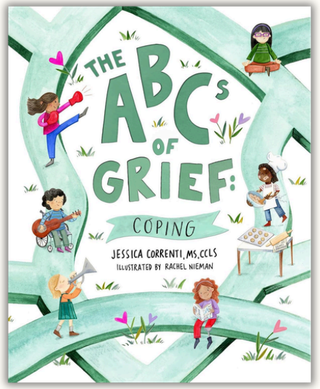




eluna

WEEK 6: MY COPING

- **Goal: Discover activities that support healthy grief expression**
- Activities
  - My Resource Tree*
  - Step IN and Step OUT*
  - Coping Skills Poster*
  - Capes
  - Coping Skills Competition
- Considerations:
  - Highlight Health vs. Unhealthy - Moderation
  - Try them on to see if they fit





eluna

WEEK 7: MY CONNECTION

- **Goal: Identify ways to maintain connection to and honor the person we are remembering.**
- Activities
  - Goodbye Letter*
  - Meaningful Messages*
  - 25 Small Ways to Feel Connected Throughout Grief*
  - Ocean Drum*
- Considerations:
  - It can be meaningful to share all the different ways to send special messages and deciding as a group which they would like to do during the last group.



Activity: Meaningful Messages

eluna RESOURCE CENTER

Objective

Symbolically communicating with the person or people that we are remembering can be helpful in facilitating healthy grief expression. This is especially true regarding thoughts and feelings that are particularly difficult to say out loud. For this activity, family members will choose from a variety of creative modalities to draw, write, or meditate on meaningful messages that will be symbolically shared with the person who has died. Meaningful Messages activities can foster a sense of ongoing connection to the person being remembered.

Options & considerations

Meditative
- Blow bubble messages
- Fly a kite messages
- Skipping rocks messages
- Release flowers on the water messages

Draw/Write
- Wish paper messages
- Dissolving paper messages
- Messages in the sand

The important thing to consider for this activity is to create an intentional time and space to think about the message to be sent and then following through by deciding on a delivery method that feels both practical and meaningful to you & your family in this season.

Supplies

Bubbles and kites can be found at local dollar stores, while fresh flowers can be purchased at a farmers market or grocery store. Water-soluble paper and flying wish paper can be purchased online. Two options are linked below:
- Dissolving paper
- Flying Wish paper

Additional sugges

Be mindful of weather impl
practice trial run is recomm
using either flying wish or dis
paper prior to facilitating the
as a family.

Thank you, Kelly Petersohn, from C
Online for developing & sharing thi

https://elunanetwork.org/resources/activity-meaningful-messages

Goodbye Letter

Writing a goodbye letter to someone who died can be a powerful way to express your thoughts and feelings. Complete all or some of the prompts below. Then you choose: Share, save or shred.

Dear _____,
I want you to know that _____
I will miss not being able to _____
I feel sad that you won't be there when I _____
What I miss most is _____
If you were here now, I would tell you _____
I think if you were here now, you would tell me _____
I feel good knowing that _____
Something that you taught me is _____
Thank you for _____
_____

eluna

I'll Always Be There

A CHILDREN'S BOOK ABOUT LOSS & CELEBRATING MEMORIES

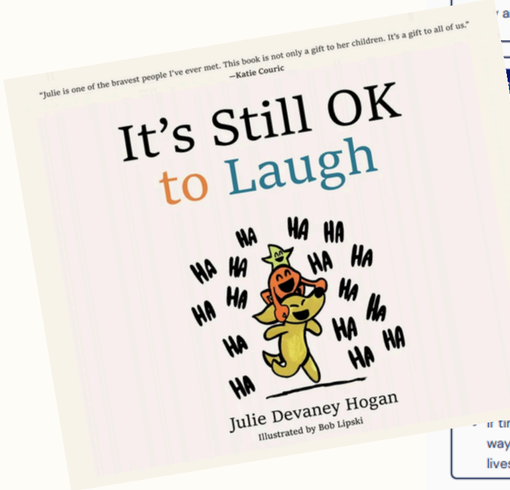
written by Pionna Brown and Olivia Brown

illustrated by Anastasiya Rudyk

eluna

WEEK 8: MY PROGRESS

- **Goal: Explore how our grief has changed over time and identify ways to be intentional in prioritizing ongoing progress throughout my grief journey.**
- Activities
  - Forever Blended*
  - The Way We've Grown*
  - Supports and Comforts*
  - Meaningful Message Activity*
- Considerations
  - Provide an evaluation
  - Share additional available resources
  - Send home Resource List





eluna

A GUIDE TO STARTING GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS



Guide to Starting Grief Support Groups for Kids and Teens

Learn how to effectively support young people through grief with Eluna's guide to starting grief support groups for kids and teens.

Eluna /

WEEK 3 – My Grief

Purpose: Explore "What is grief?" and the unique ways it impacts every part of our lives. Help children notice where grief shows up physically and normalize those sensations.

Activity Options:

- **Your Grief is Unique** - invites participants to reflect on and share how grief shows up for them emotionally, physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually, using a printable worksheet to spark discussion.
- **Grief Puzzle** - youth create puzzle pieces showing how their grief feels (color, sound, animal, flavor).
- **How Grief Shows Up in the Body** - 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.

Book:

- **What Does Grief Feel Like?** - uses gentle, open-ended questions and child-friendly language to help young readers explore and validate their own unique experience of grief after their person dies.
- **Grief Is a Mess** (Author Series read-aloud) Reinforces uniqueness and emotional variability. Invite youth to reflect about any parts of the story that stood out to them or is connected to their experience.

Considerations: Assess what youth already know, gently highlight any misconceptions, unknowns, or untruths, and take into account their capacity for abstract thinking.

eluna

CAMP MARIPOSA

PART OF THE ELUNA NETWORK

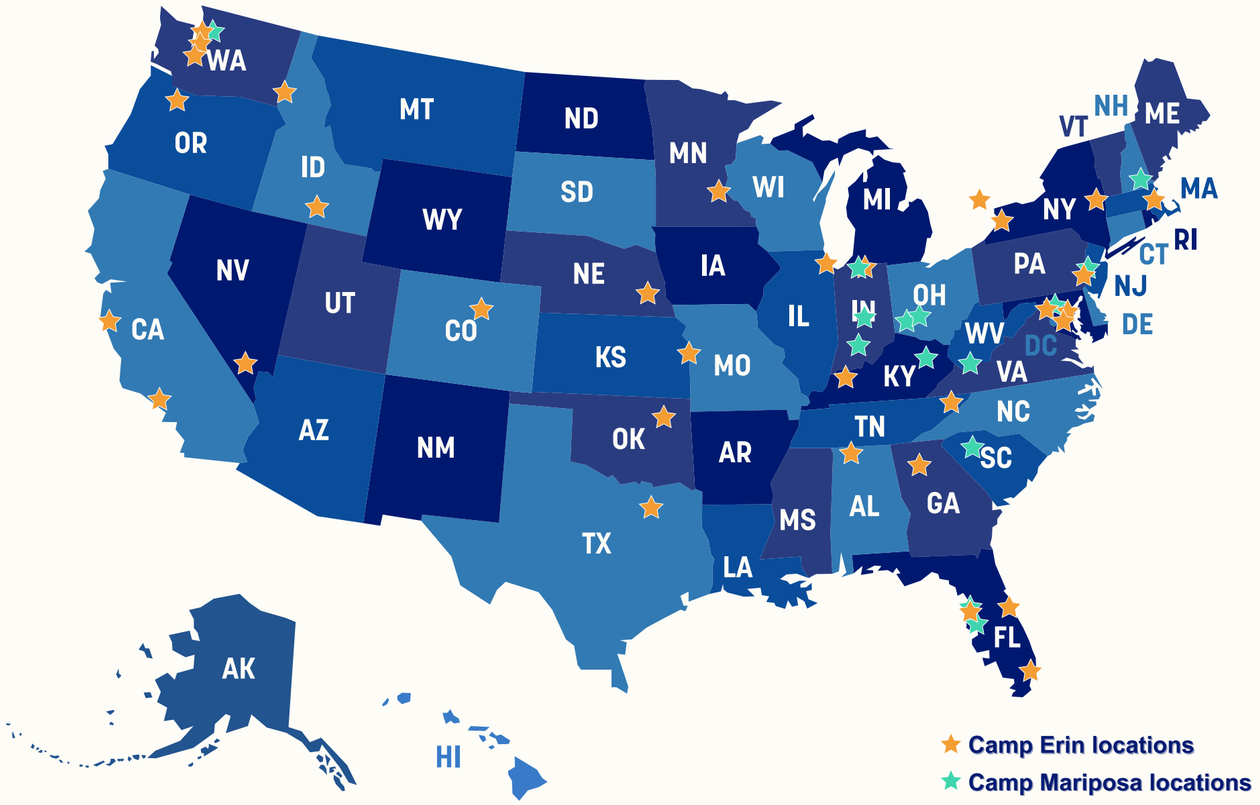
eluna

RESOURCE CENTER

CAMP ERIN

PART OF THE ELUNA NETWORK

WHEREVER YOU ARE, WE'RE HERE FOR YOU



eluna

RESOURCE CENTER

Pillars of Support

Personalized Support



Education Tools & Trainings

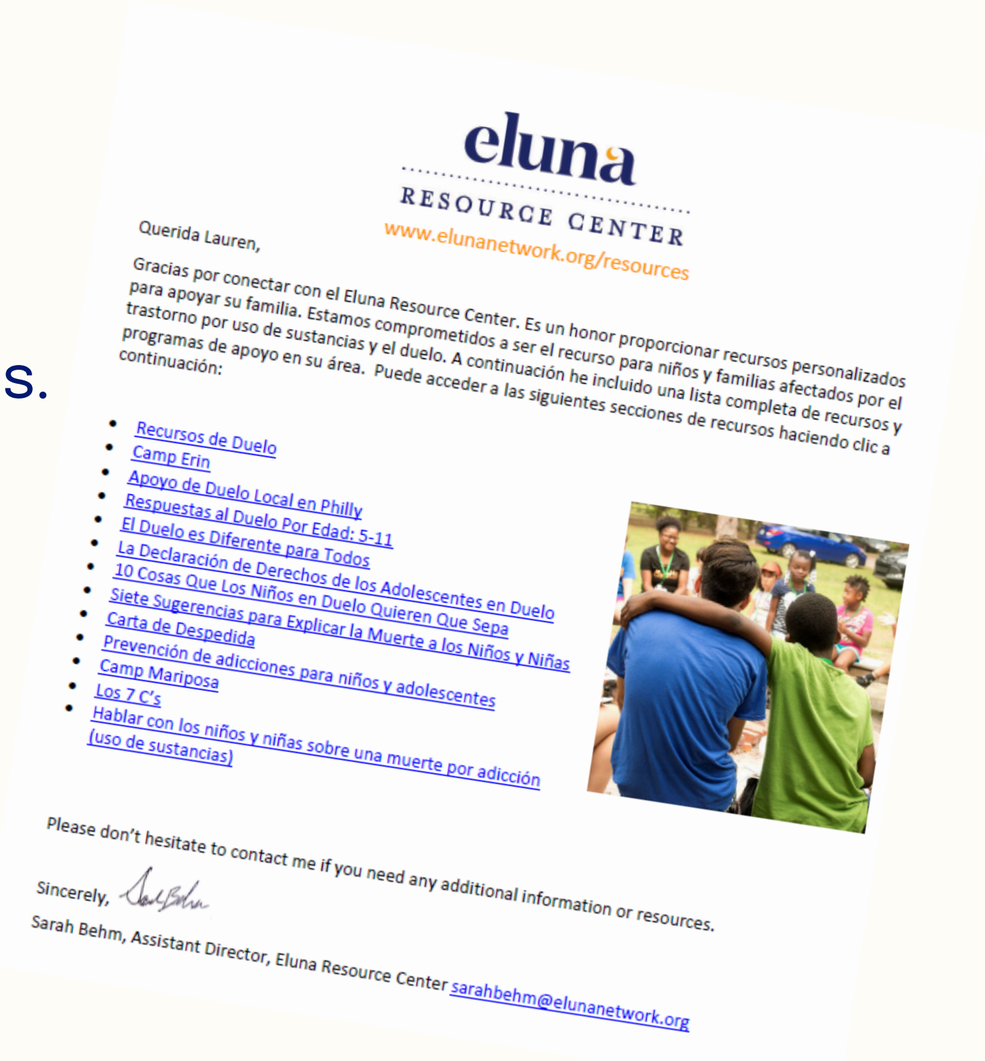


Resource Library & Program Guide



PERSONALIZED SUPPORT

- Personalized letter
- Resources – specific to youth age, relationship, and type of challenge or loss.
- Recommendations – books, activities, tip sheets, articles, videos
- Referrals – Eluna, national, and local programs



eluna
RESOURCE CENTER
www.elunanetwork.org/resources

Querida Lauren,

Gracias por conectar con el Eluna Resource Center. Es un honor proporcionar recursos personalizados para apoyar su familia. Estamos comprometidos a ser el recurso para niños y familias afectados por el trastorno por uso de sustancias y el duelo. A continuación he incluido una lista completa de recursos y programas de apoyo en su área. Puede acceder a las siguientes secciones de recursos haciendo clic a continuación:

- Recursos de Duelo
- Camp Erin
- Apoyo de Duelo Local en Philly
- Respuestas al Duelo Por Edad: 5-11
- El Duelo es Diferente para Todos
- La Declaración de Derechos de los Adolescentes en Duelo
- 10 Cosas Que Los Niños en Duelo Quieren Que Sepa
- Siete Sugerencias para Explicar la Muerte a los Niños y Niñas
- Carta de Despedida
- Prevención de adicciones para niños y adolescentes
- Camp Mariposa
- Los 7 C's
- Hablar con los niños y niñas sobre una muerte por adicción (uso de sustancias)

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need any additional information or resources.

Sincerely,

Sarah Behm, Assistant Director, Eluna Resource Center sarahbehm@elunanetwork.org

eluna

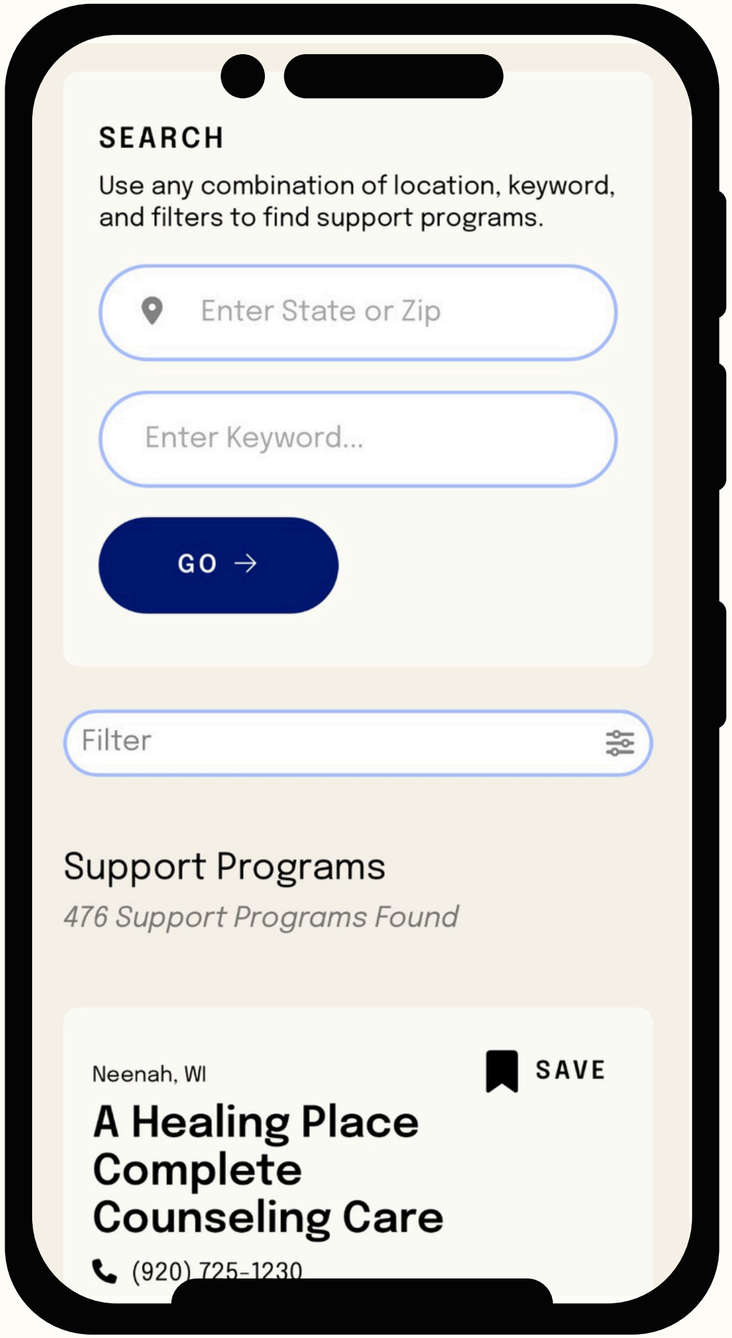


RESOURCE LIBRARY

- **Search and find** resources amongst our array of activities, videos, books, and conversation starters.

- **Save and Share** them too!

eluna



NATIONAL PROGRAM GUIDE

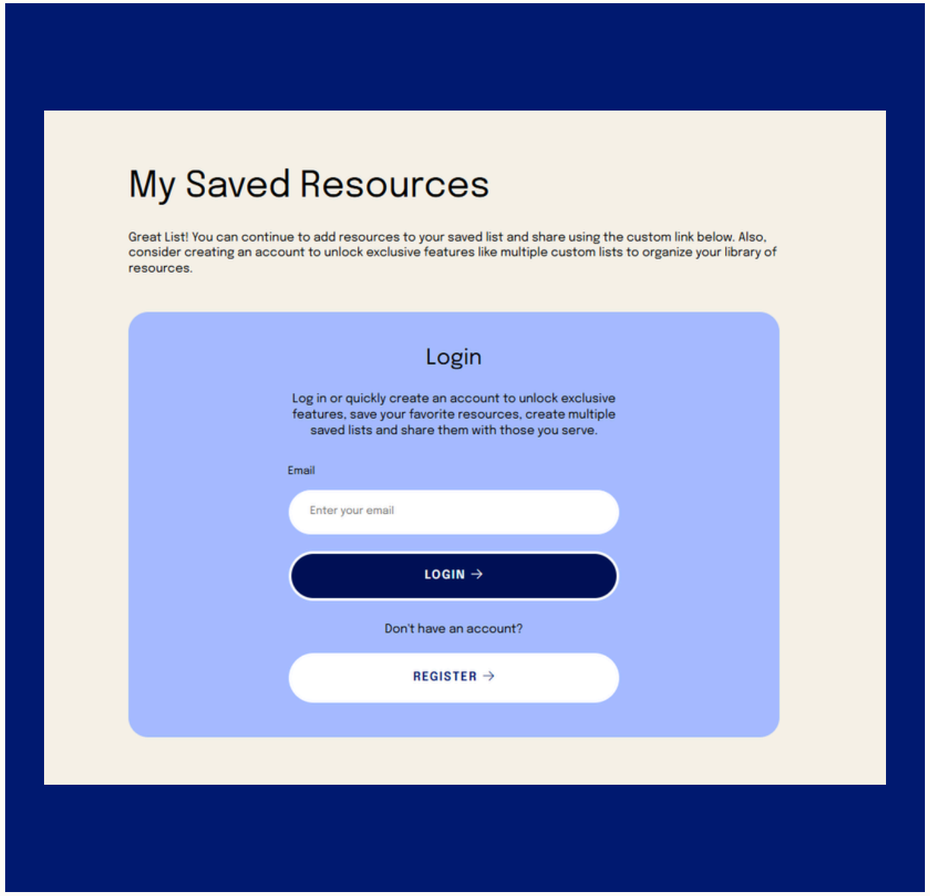
- **Search by location** for support programs - like camps, groups, and online support options - for youth and adults impacted by grief or addiction in the family.

- **Save and Share** them too!

eluna

ERC POWER USER

eluna
RESOURCE CENTER



1. **Sign Up:** Easy registration with just your email and name (no password needed)
2. **Search & Save**: As you search the ERC library, click the ‘save’ icon to auto save resources to your default list.
3. **Share**: Using the share button, you can distribute your personalized list with a unique link or email
4. **Build & Customize**: Revisit your saved resources to add/delete/reorder as needed for various students, clients, families.

eluna



Time for some questions

eluna



Share your feedback!

Kelly Petersohn, LCSW

Camp Erin Online Programs Manager
KellyPetersohn@elunanetwork.org

Sarah Behm Guillén, PPS, MBA

Director, Eluna Resource Center
SarahGuillen@elunanetwork.org



eluna