

HI, I'M GRIEF

READ-ALOUD GUIDE

HONEST WORDS. GENTLE PAUSES.

A practical guide for reading Hi, I'm Grief with children in classrooms, libraries, counseling spaces, community groups, or at home.



INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- Before-you-read preparation
- Page-by-page pause points
- Language extensions and privacy care
- After-reading activities and quick reference

BEFORE YOU OPEN THE BOOK

A GENTLE READ-ALoud BEGINS BEFORE THE FIRST PAGE.

You cannot predict every response. You can create a calm frame, offer real choices, and plan what support will look like if the story touches something tender.

PREVIEW THE STORY

Read the book first. Notice the direct language, the emotional characters, and the lines you may want to extend or clarify.

KNOW THE ROOM

Consider recent losses, family communication, culture, faith, language, and whether anyone may need a private heads-up.

PLAN THE CHOICE

Decide where a child may sit, draw, step out, or talk later - and which adult will follow up.

A SIMPLE WAY TO OPEN

"This story introduces Grief and several feelings that may visit after a loss. Feelings do not arrive in one order, and no one has to feel every one. You may listen, ask a question, draw, take a quiet break, or talk with me later."

IMPORTANT FRAME: FEELINGS ARE NOT A CHECKLIST

The story personifies denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, resilience, empathy, strength, and reflection. Present them as possible visitors, not stages a child must move through. Feelings can overlap, return, disappear, or look different from one person to another.

ADULT PREPARATION CHECK

- I will not ask children to identify or disclose a personal loss publicly.
- I know who can offer private support during and after the reading.
- I can stop, shorten, or postpone the activity if the room needs something else.

DURING THE STORY - PART ONE

PAUSE LIGHTLY. FOLLOW THE ROOM.

You do not need to ask every question. Choose one pause when it helps children notice, wonder, or connect without requiring personal disclosure.



PAGES 7-9

MEET GRIEF

ASK

What do you notice about Grief before he begins his journey?

NOTICE

Let children describe the character, setting, body language, or what the name Grief makes them wonder.

PAGES 10-11

DENIAL

ASK

Why might someone say, 'No problems here,' even when something feels hard?

NOTICE

Denial can be a protective response. Extend the line 'choose to be real' by noting that readiness cannot be forced.

PAGES 12-13

ANGER

ASK

What might anger be trying to tell us?
What helps anger stay safe?

NOTICE

Some children talk; others need movement, quiet, drawing, or time. Anger is a feeling - hurting someone is an action.

PAGES 14-15

BARGAINING

ASK

What kinds of 'if only' wishes might show up after something cannot be changed?

NOTICE

Clarify that thoughts, promises, and wishes do not cause a death and cannot make a death the child's fault.

FACILITATOR CUE

If a child shares something personal, thank them briefly and protect the group from becoming the place where the whole story must be told: 'Thank you for telling us. We can make time to talk more privately after.'

DURING THE STORY - PART TWO

NOTICE WHAT MAKES ROOM, NOT WHAT MAKES GRIEF DISAPPEAR.

Continue to treat every feeling as optional, changeable, and welcome. Strength can include tears, rest, questions, help, and ordinary play.



PAGES 16-17

SADNESS

ASK

What changes when Sadness is not crying alone?

NOTICE

Connection may help a feeling become more bearable. It does not mean sadness must become lighter on a schedule.

PAGES 18-19

RESILIENCE

ASK

What could 'standing tall' look like on a very hard day?

NOTICE

Expand strength to include asking for help, taking a break, trying again, remembering, or simply getting through the moment.

PAGES 20-21

EMPATHY

ASK

How can we show care without trying to fix another person's feeling?

NOTICE

Listening, sitting nearby, remembering a name, offering a choice, or checking in later can all communicate care.

PAGES 22-23

STRENGTH + REFLECTION

ASK

What can we learn by looking back - and who can help us when reflection is not enough?

NOTICE

Gently extend 'are enough'. Inner strengths matter, and people also deserve relationships, routines, and professional support when needed.

PAGES 24-27 - BRING THE FEELINGS TOGETHER

Ask: 'Which feelings seemed to help one another?' Close the sequence by reminding children that emotions may travel together, in any order, and that joy or ordinary play does not cancel grief.

GENTLE LANGUAGE EXTENSIONS

KEEP THE STORY. ADD A LITTLE ROOM AROUND IT.

A brief extension can prevent a memorable rhyme from sounding like a rule. You do not need to correct the book mid-story; choose the clarification that fits your setting.



STORY LINE

“We must choose to be real.”

ADD IF USEFUL

Sometimes our minds protect us from hard facts. We can return to the truth gently, when we have support.

STORY LINE

“Talk it out with me.”

ADD IF USEFUL

Talking can help, and it is not the only way. We can move, draw, breathe, sit quietly, or talk later.

STORY LINE

'It was time to bid him adieu.'

ADD IF USEFUL

If-only thoughts may return. We can notice them without believing we caused or can reverse the death.

STORY LINE

'Allow it to heal'

ADD IF USEFUL

Healing does not mean forgetting or finishing grief. It can mean learning how to carry love and loss together.

STORY LINE

'Inner strength and self-reflection are enough.'

ADD IF USEFUL

Our own strengths matter, and so do caring people, practical support, and extra help when life feels too heavy.

KEEP PRIVACY INTACT

Use invitations such as 'Some people notice...' instead of asking, 'Who here has had someone die?'

AFTER THE LAST PAGE

OFFER ONE GENTLE NEXT STEP - THEN LET THE STORY SETTLE.



Children do not need to complete an activity to prove engagement. Choose one option, keep it brief, and leave a path for questions that arrive later.

NOTICE ONE VISITOR

Invite children to name or draw one feeling that visited the story. They may invent a different feeling, too.

DRAW THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Create a place where feelings can visit without taking over the whole town. Add people, routines, or spaces that help.

FINISH THE SENTENCE

Offer: 'When a feeling is big, I might need...' Children may write, draw, choose from examples, or pass.

MAKE A SUPPORT MAP

Name one person, one place, and one action that can help during a hard moment. Keep plans specific and usable.

A CLOSING SCRIPT

"Feelings can visit in many combinations and in no particular order. You do not have to name every feeling or talk about anything personal. If a question comes later, you can bring it to me or another trusted adult."

IF A CHILD HAS A RECENT LOSS

Coordinate with the caregiver or support team when appropriate. Offer a private check-in after the group, preserve ordinary routine where helpful, and avoid making the child a spokesperson for grief.

KEEP THIS CLOSE

READ-ALoud QUICK REFERENCE



Use this one-page reminder while preparing or facilitating. Adapt it to the child, family, community, and setting in front of you.

BEFORE

- Preview the book and possible extensions.
- Consider recent losses and cultural context.
- Name participation choices.
- Identify a support person and quiet option.
- Plan a brief opening script.

DURING

- Read slowly and watch the room.
- Choose only useful pauses.
- Invite without requiring disclosure.
- Let drawing, movement, silence, and passing count.
- Protect personal stories from becoming public processing.

AFTER

- Offer one optional activity.
- Repeat that feelings have no required order.
- Name who is available later.
- Check in privately when appropriate.
- Share follow-up resources with caregivers.

IF A CHILD BECOMES OVERWHELMED

- Lower the demand: pause reading, reduce questions, and offer a quieter space.
- Stay concrete: name where they are, who is with them, and what will happen next.
- Follow the child's established support or safety plan and your setting's procedures.

THE CENTRAL REMINDER

"The goal is not to make grief go away. The goal is to make room for truth, choice, connection, and the next question."