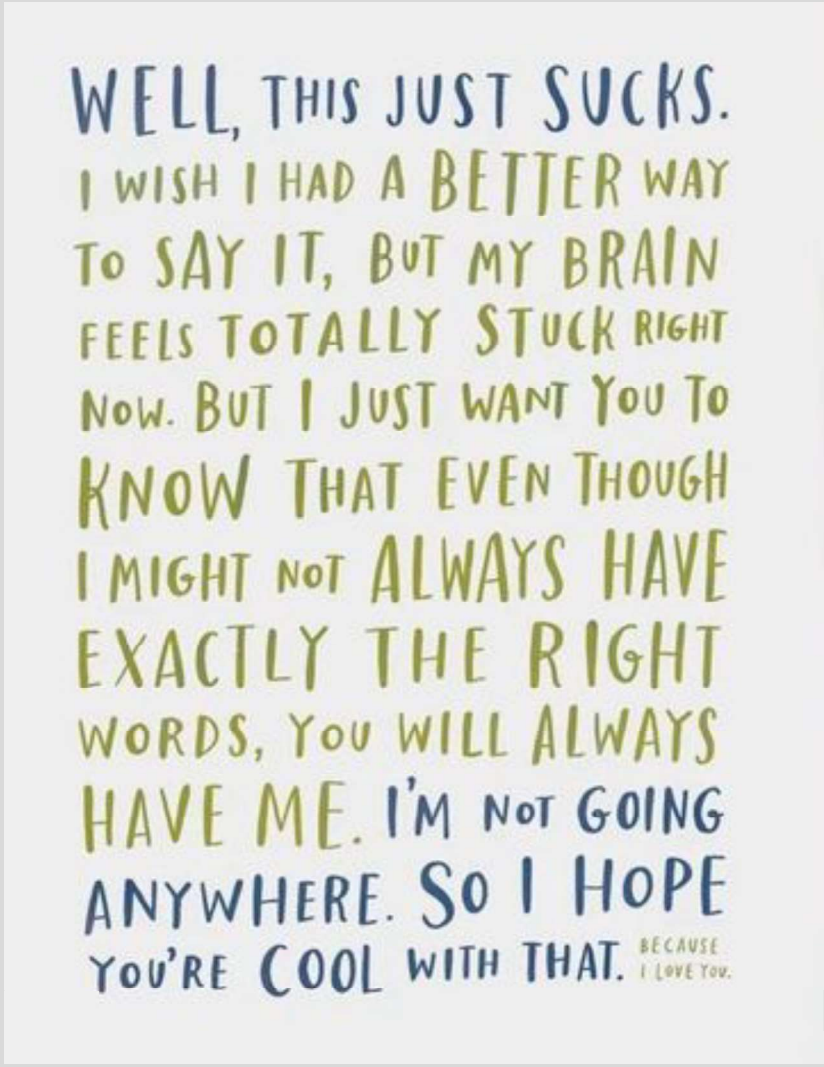
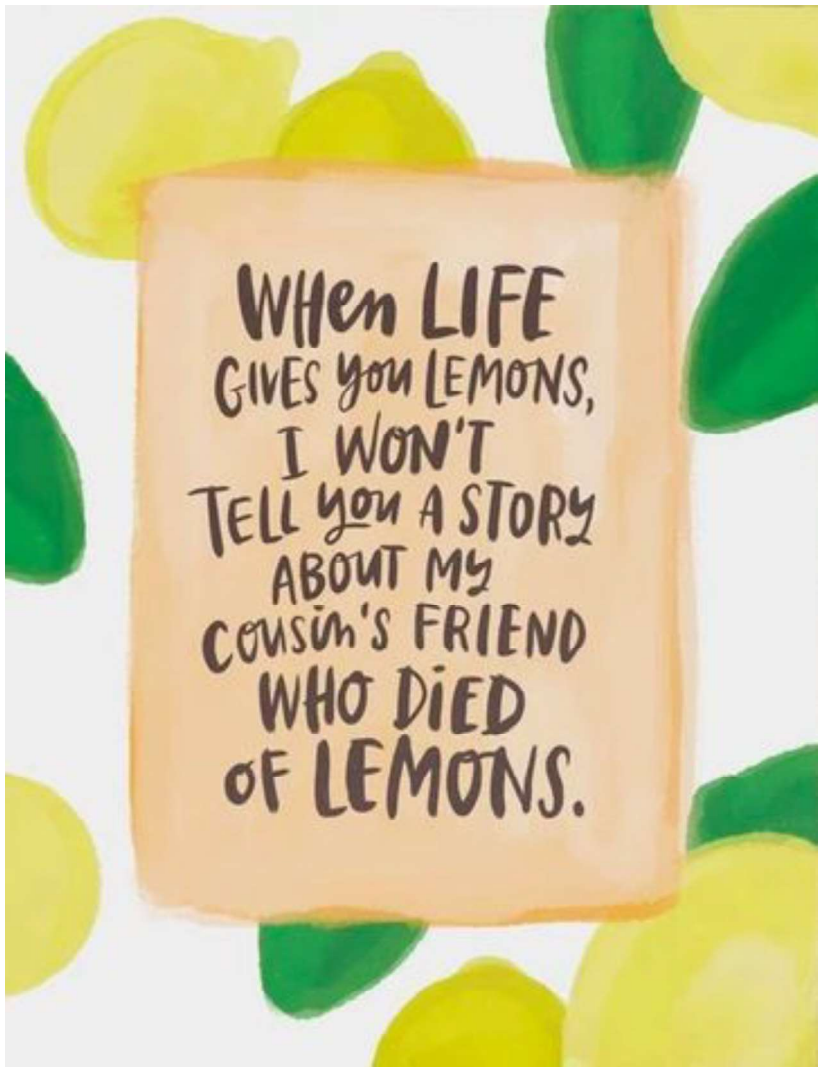
Let's Talk About Grief



All card images by Emily McDowell

Overview

1. Understanding grief
2. How to show up for someone who is grieving
3. Creating a grief-aware camp culture



First, a little bit about us and Experience Camps

Sara Deren & Brie Overton

Founder & CEO + Chief Clinical Officer

We give grieving children experiences that change their lives forever.



The issue of grief is...

- ➔ Common
  - 1 in 5 children will experience a significant death loss before age 18 – and 7% of all children experience the death of a parent or sibling.
  - COVID-19 is accelerating loss: researchers at Penn State and USC found that, for every person who dies of Covid-19, nine close family members are affected – meaning that 4.5 million more Americans are grieving right now.
- ➔ Important
  - Grieving children are especially vulnerable to negative outcomes such as increased anxiety, depression, and even an increased risk of mortality.
  - When we talk about grief, we can reduce isolation and promote resilience, confidence and self-esteem.
- ➔ Actionable
  - By educating others and taking action, we create a grief-smart culture that has extensive ripple effects in our mental health systems and communities.

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Grief isn't just about death

- Death of a person or pet
- Cancellation of a life event
- Loved one with illness
- Child hospitalized
- Natural disaster
- Public tragedy
- End of a relationship
- Divorce
- Job loss
- Camp-celation

Debunking the Myths

Myth #1

There are stages of grief

Myth #2

There is a timeline

Myth #3

The goal of grief is to “get back to normal” or “move on”

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How can you show up for others?



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Let’s start with what NOT to do

Don’t say:

- I know how you feel.
- It will get better with time.
- They are in a better place.
- Everything happens for a reason.
- Be strong.
- At least…

Don’t try to fix it. It’s not broken.

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More DON'Ts

- **Don't reference faith or religion unless you are certain it will resonate for that individual.**
  - "God only gives us what we can handle"
  - "The best get called home"
- **Don't feel like you have to have a "comparable" loss. It's ok to not be able to relate.**
- **Don't ask questions that imply blame or responsibility.**
  - When hearing about a father's lung cancer, asking "was he a smoker?"
  - When someone has died by suicide, asking "did you know he was so depressed?"

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So then what CAN I say and do?

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When a loss just happened...

What to SAY:

- **Acknowledge the gravity of the situation.**
  - Oh Jen, that sucks.
  - Thank you for telling me.
  - I'm here for you.
  - Grief is so difficult. Please take care of yourself.
  - Take all the time you need.
  - I'm not sure what the right thing is to say. I care about you.
- **Always. Say. Something.**

What to DO:

- Send a card
- Send a gift card for UberEats or a Goldbelly meal
- Attend the service
- Can I help you...finish this project, bring lunch tomorrow, research local florists, tell other people, etc.
- Make a donation in the person's name

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Be present.

- **Sit in the mud.** Be where they are. Witnessing is a huge part of what helps to heal. When people witness your pain, it feels shared, and the isolation is lessened.
- **Rock your body.** Use good body language. Make eye contact. Look at the person. Stay attuned. Have a posture that shows you are attentive to the person. Just nodding and being present is huge.
- **Paraphrase and summarize.** Try to focus on what they feel and reflect back. “It sounds like that was such a difficult time for you” or “you were angry”.

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Grief at Camp

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What grieving kids say...



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How to be grief-aware at camp

DIRECTORS: Talk with the camper before camp specifically about the death, how they cope, and how you plan to support them if in need while at camp. Make sure *they* know *you* know about the death and are available for support.

Listen



(set) Limits



Look

(for warning signs)



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#TAG
(Talk About Grief)

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Thank you!

Drop us a line anytime.
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