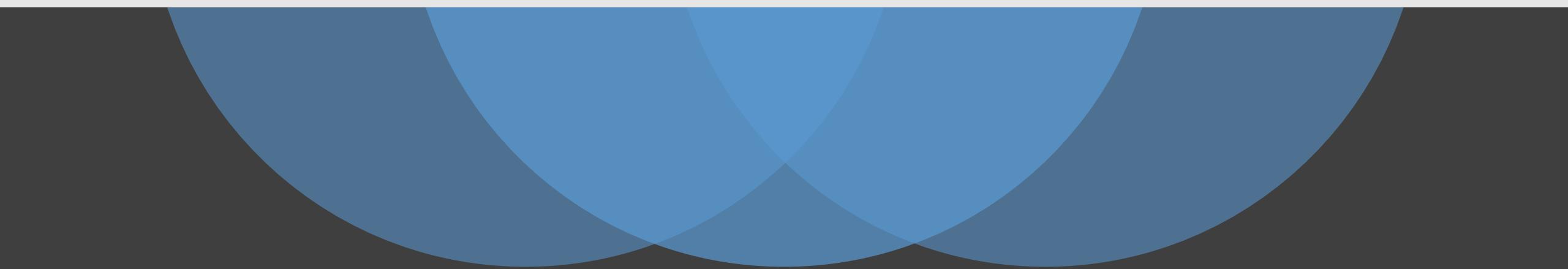


Jessica Scott, School
Social Worker
John Kelly, School
Psychologist

Children and Loss



“Loss is like an earthquake that fractures
and devastates our emotional landscape”

"Helping a child cope with loss is perhaps one of the most important roles an adult can play. In effect, you are helping that child develop skills that can last a lifetime."

Typical Reactions to Loss

Sadness

Feelings of anger, denial, shock and confusion

Boisterous play

Loss of concentration and/or irritability

Humiliation or guilt over personal failure to prevent loss of life

Frequent physical complaints such as stomachaches and headaches

Complicated Reaction to LOSS

Profound emotional reactions-anxiety attacks, chronic fatigue, anger, thoughts of suicide

Extended depression with a loss of interest in daily activities and events

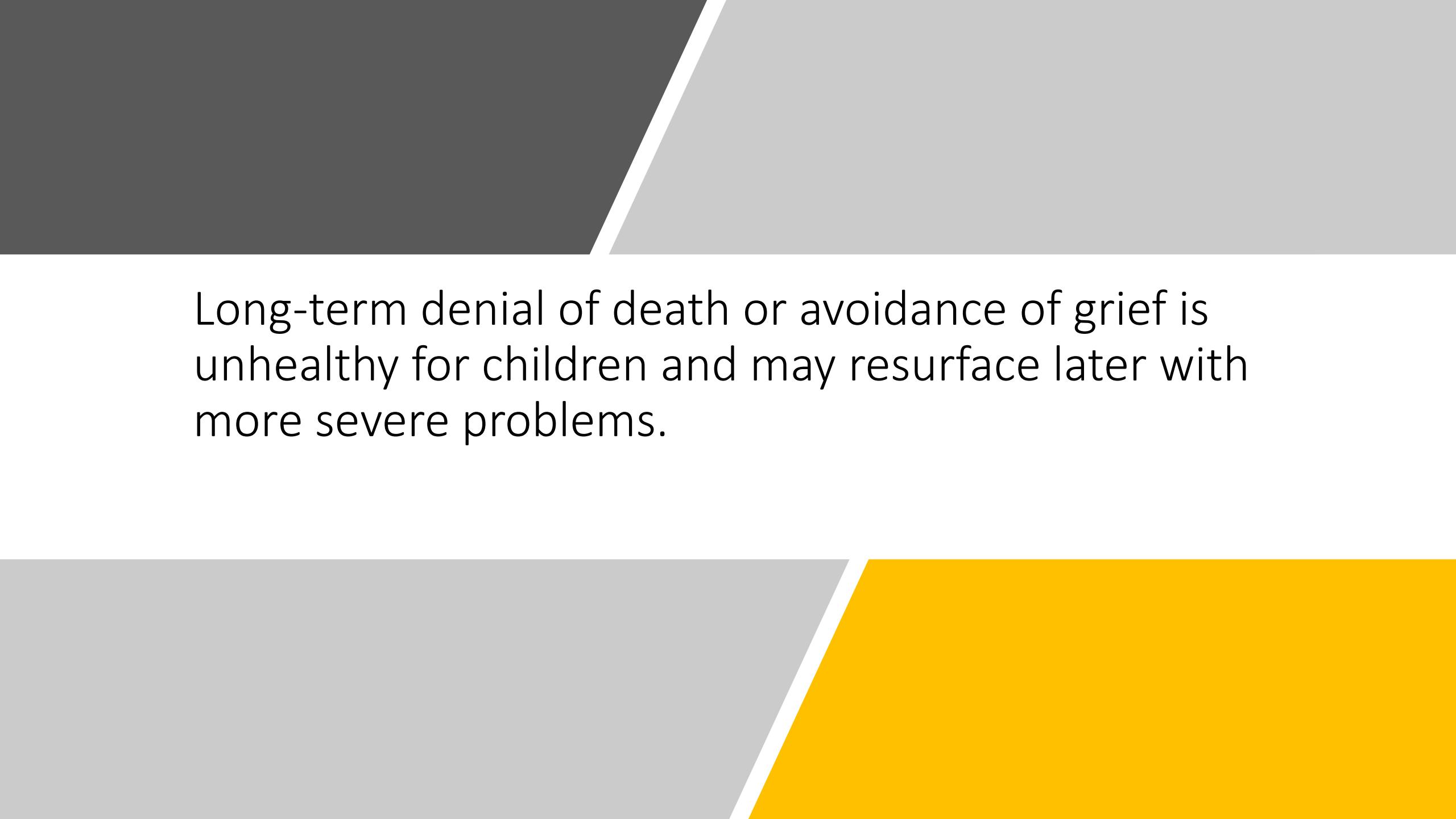
Inability to sleep, nightmares, loss of appetite, prolonged fear of being alone

Withdrawal from friends

Sharp drop in school performance or refusal to attend school

Excessively imitating or asking questions about the deceased; repeated statements of wanting to join the deceased; inventing games about dying

Acting much younger for an extended period or reverting to earlier behaviors (e.g., bedwetting, baby talk, thumb-sucking)



Long-term denial of death or avoidance of grief is unhealthy for children and may resurface later with more severe problems.

Ways to help ...

- Children are concrete in their thinking. To lessen confusion, avoid expressions such as “passed on” or “went to sleep.” Answer their questions about death simply and honestly. Only offer details that they can absorb. Don't overload them with information.
- Children can be fearful about death and the future. Don't offer false comfort. Give them a chance to talk about their fears and validate their feelings. Offer a simple expression of sorrow and take time to listen.
- Children are repetitive in their grief. Respond patiently to their uncertainty and concerns. It can take a long time to recover from a loss.
- Children are physical in their grief. Watch their bodies, understand and support their play and actions as their "language" of grief. Offer reassurance.

Tips for Parents

- Reassure children that they are safe
- Make time to talk
- Keep your explanations developmentally appropriate
- Observe children's emotional state
- Limit television and social media viewing of these events
- Maintain a normal routine

Creating Your Personal Stress-Management Plan



Stress ...

- In middle school, pressures may come from a number of sources-from within the child, as well as from parents, teachers, peers and the larger society in which the child lives.
- Pressure can take many forms that challenge children and to which they must respond and, often, adapt.
- Demands or stresses are a part of children's daily existence.
- Whatever its form, if stress is too intense or long-lasting, it can sometimes take a toll on children

What are some signs that a teen or adolescent is suffering from stress?

- Increased complaints of headache, stomachache, muscle pain and/or tiredness.
- Shutting down and withdrawing from people and activities.
- Increased anger or irritability (i.e., lashing out at people and situations).
- Crying more often and appearing teary-eyed.
- Feelings of hopelessness.
- Chronic anxiety and nervousness.
- Changes in sleeping and eating habits (i.e., insomnia, nightmares, or being “too busy” to eat).
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Experimentation with drugs or alcohol.

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Strategies

- Unhealthy Coping
 - Procrastination
 - Over-eating
 - Sleeping too much/too little
 - Drugs and/or alcohol
 - Social withdrawal
 - Self-harm
 - Aggression
- Healthy Coping
 - Exercise
 - Talking about stressors
 - Healthy eating
 - Seeking professional support
 - Relaxation
 - Social support
 - Problem solving

How can parents help children and teens manage stress?

- Be aware of your child's behaviors and emotions.
- Build trust with your child.
- Be available and open to talk with your child when he or she is ready.
- Encourage the expression of feelings.
- Teach and model good emotional responses.
- Encourage your child to tell you if he or she feels overwhelmed.
- Encourage healthy and diverse friendships.
- Encourage physical activity, good nutrition, and rest.
- Teach your child to problem solve.
- Remind your child of his or her ability to get through tough times, particularly with the love and support of family and friends.
- Keep your child aware of anticipated family changes.
- Monitor television programs that could worry your child and pay attention to the use of computer games, movies, and the Internet.
- Use encouragement and natural consequences when poor decisions are made.
- Help your child select appropriate extracurricular activities and limit overscheduling.
- Make your child aware of the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol before experimentation begins.
- Monitor your own stress level. Take care of yourself.
- Contact your child's teacher with any concerns and make him or her part of the team available to assist your child.
- Seek the assistance of a physician, school psychologist, school counselor, or school social worker if stress continues to be a concern.



Connecting with others is important

- Types of Social Support
 - Emotional support – help managing emotions, someone to listen to you
 - Tangible support – help with practical problems, someone to give you a ride to a friend's house, take you to the store
 - Informational support – help you with information to problem solve, someone to give you advice or information needed to overcome challenge
 - Social needs – help with basic social needs, someone to love, care about you, help you feel like you belong



Building your social support

- Pay attention to your relationships – reach out to your family and friends
- Increase community involvement – get involved in with sports, arts, religious, special interest groups, both in school and in community
- Attend support groups – connect with others who are experiencing similar life issues or experiences
- Seek professional supports – doctors, therapists, & other professionals can help you through issues that are complicated or too tough to deal with on your own



Benefits of Social Support

- Better physical and emotional health
- Able to deal with stress and challenges better (resilient!)
- Feel better about yourself (self-esteem)
- Feel more secure
- More satisfied with your life

Protective Factors

- Social Support
 - Being able to talk to someone
 - Feeling loved and cared about
 - Feeling like you belong
- Coping skills
 - Being able to manage emotions
 - Recognize how emotions impact behavior
- Physical health
 - Exercise
 - Healthy eating
 - Healthy sleep
- Sense of purpose
 - Meaningful involvement in school
 - Living according to values
- Self-esteem
 - Believing that you have value
 - Acceptance of our own mistakes, flaws (We're NOT perfect!)
 - Belief in ability to overcome challenges
- Healthy thinking
 - Don't focus too much on problems or negativity

Stress Management Tips

- Keep in mind that stress isn't a bad thing
- Talk about your problems, even if they won't be solved
- Prioritize your responsibilities
- Focus on the basics
- Don't put all your eggs in one basket
- Set aside time for yourself
- Keep things in perspective



Reaching out for help

- Every school has a team of school social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors (CMS & CHS) to help students in school or help families connect to community resources
- Crisis Hotlines
 - Response – 631 751-7500
 - Long Island Children's Mobile Integration Team - 631 370-1701



Thank You!