

How to Prepare Children to deal with Possible Grief and Cultivating the Soul's Resilience

PREPARATION FOR THE INEVITABLE SORROW

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To the esteemed custodians of future sustenance, the architects of tomorrow's security within the Zimbabwe Association of Pension Funds community, let us create an opportunity and time to address a matter of profound and perennial importance: the preparation of our children to navigate the inevitable archipelago of grief.

In the intricate, yet often tumultuous, voyage of human existence, sorrow remains the universal, albeit unwelcome, passenger. It is an immutable clause in the covenant of life, a shadow that lends definition to the brilliance of joy. For those who manage the delicate balance of financial providence for future generations, this contemplation extends beyond the actuarial tables and into the very psychic inheritance we bestow upon our progeny. How, then, do we equip these nascent souls, our precious scions, with the emotional armour and the philosophical compass to weather the squalls of loss?

The Parable of the Seed and the Storm: An Allegory of Endurance

Consider, if you will, the timeless allegory of the tender sapling. This young tree, our child, stands in the fertile ground of our nurturing presence. Its roots, initially shallow and timid, represent its early emotional foundation. When the sun shines bright—the season of unalloyed bliss—the sapling flourishes. But wisdom dictates that we must prepare it, not merely for the perpetual summer, but for the tempest's brutal honesty. Do we truly serve the sapling by shielding it from every whisper of the wind, or does the judicious exposure to minor breezes strengthen the trunk for the hurricane that will assuredly arrive?

To cultivate resilience is not to exorcise sorrow from the future, an impossibility even for the mightiest of pensions, but to ensure the roots grow deep, winding around the granite of inner strength and the bedrock of enduring love. This process is a delicate alchemy, transmutating

vulnerability into unflappable fortitude.

The Architect's Blueprint: Constructing a Vocabulary for the Soul

The fundamental tool in this preparation is language, a semantic scaffolding that elevates understanding above the murky depths of inchoate fear. Grief, when nameless, is a leviathan of terror; when named and catalogued, it becomes a formidable, yet definable, challenge. We must introduce our children, not with morbid intensity, but with candid gentleness, to the lexicon of finality. Use metaphors of transition: the butterfly emerging from the chrysalis, the sun setting only to promise a dawn, the season's solemn turning.

- **The Broken Locket:** Explain that when a loved one passes, it is akin to a magnificent, intricate locket breaking. The precious contents—the memories, the laughter, the lessons—are not lost; they are merely transferred from the locket (the body) to the safekeeping chamber of the heart and mind. The locket's absence is painful, but the treasure remains, imperishable and potent.
- **The Echo in the Valley:** Teach them that love is not dissipated by departure, but rather becomes an echo. When a stone of sadness is thrown, the echo of the departed's love and wisdom is heard—a comforting reverberation that persists long after the initial sound has faded.

**“What is lovely never dies, but passes
into another loveliness, star-dust or
sea-foam, flower or winged air.”**

~Thomas Bailey Aldrich~

This poetic affirmation underscores the concept of transformation over annihilation.

The Humour of Imperfection: A Safety Valve for the Overburdened Heart

In the midst of such a weighty discourse, one might question the inclusion of levity. Yet, the judicious application of humour is not an act of dismissal, but a necessary safety valve for the

spirit. It teaches the vital lesson of emotional elasticity. Tell tales where characters fumble, where the absurdity of life's paradoxes is highlighted. A joke that acknowledges human awkwardness in the face of deep feeling can normalize the struggle. For instance, a simple, non-offensive anecdote about a great-uncle who insisted on wearing two different-coloured socks to every family gathering, and how that quirky memory brings a smile even amidst a tear. These tiny stories build a bridge between the sacred solemnity of loss and the joyous messiness of remembrance. Laughter, in its deepest form, is a defiant declaration that the light of memory will not be extinguished by the gloom of absence.

The Moral of the Tale: Practicing the Art of Letting Go

Life itself offers myriad micro-opportunities for grief preparation—the death of a beloved pet, the end of a favourite childhood series, the departure of a cherished teacher. These are not mere occurrences; they are miniature morality plays in the theater of the heart.

Let us recall the Tale of the Sandcastle Builder:

A young, zealous architect spends all day constructing a magnificent sandcastle, a citadel of meticulous design. As the tide inevitably creeps closer, the child cries out in despair. The wise parent does not stop the tide (for who can halt Father Time's relentless march?), but instead sits with the child, witnessing the splendor of the castle's life and the dignity of its slow dissolution. The lesson is profound: beauty is often transient, and the value lies not in the permanence of the creation, but in the joyous, focused effort of the building. When the tide recedes, the parent asks, "Was it not a magnificent time building it?" This shifts the focus from the empty space to the richness of the shared experience. We must encourage *mélancholie*—a pensive sadness—rather than catastrophe. The former is a nuanced acknowledgment of life's passing, the latter, an unwarranted verdict of utter ruin.



The Oaths of Preparation: Four Pillars of Emotional Inheritance

In our role as parents and community elders, we are the first Grief Gurus. Our preparation hinges on four cardinal principles:

1. The Pillar of Open Dialogue (The Un-Muted Conversation): Never let silence become a shroud. Talk about your own feelings, past losses, and the concept of mortality with measured honesty. This demystifies the Taboo of Termination.
2. The Pillar of Ritual and Remembrance (The Eternal Flame): Teach the power of commemoration. A yearly tradition, a dedicated photo album, a story told at a special moment. This affirms that the departed exist in a realm of perpetual memory.
3. The Pillar of Emotional Permission (The Sanctuary of Feeling): Give absolute licence for expression. There is no "right way" to grieve. Whether it is tempestuous weeping or stoic quietude, the child's response is valid. Ask, "Where does this sadness live in your body?" to promote somatic awareness.
4. The Pillar of Interconnectedness (The Unbreakable Chain): Emphasize that in loss, the remaining community coalesces and strengthens. Remind them that they are links in a mighty, ancestral chain—they are supported by the living and inspired by the memory of the dead.



A Final Admonition: The Pension of the Heart

As Trustees and service providers, your roles safeguard the financial pensions that provide comfort in the twilight years. Let us, as a society, equally invest in the "Pension of the Heart" for our children. This is a fund of emotional wisdom, metaphorical comprehension, and unshakeable compassion that they can draw upon when the inexorable withdrawal of a loved one occurs.

It requires diligence, courage and conversational artistry. By addressing the subject with poetic flair and unflinching sincerity, we do not burden them; we liberate them. We transform the spectre of despair into the sacred crucible in which their truest, most empathic self is forged. Let the next generation be defined not by their fear of the end, but by the magnificent quality of their enduring love and their cultivated resilience.