



## Everything I Learned About Grief I Learned in Kindergarten

*By Joy Johnson*

- I learned that things and people and animals die, whether they're really old like old dogs and old cats and old grandparents or really young, like little birds and tiny mice and real babies.
- I learned that parents and teachers and grandparents and aunts and uncles and grown-ups who like you don't want you to cry because then they feel bad.
- I learned that not everyone tells you the truth; like when my friend was told his favorite uncle went on a long trip; but the uncle never came back. Or like when my great-grandmother was dying and people kept talking as if she were going to just sit up and be well one day. She never was.
- I learned that grown-ups are a lot more afraid of funerals and death and cemeteries than children. And when they go to funerals and cemeteries some of them fold their arms and never, ever look at each other.
- I learned that the best food in the world comes to your house right after someone dies and that it can stay there for a long time.
- I learned that the people who talk to children and tell them the truth are more relaxed and play more than the ones who don't.
- I learned a lot of teachers know a lot about math, but not much about being sad.
- And a lot of mothers know a lot about getting you up in the morning and making sure you eat, but not much about grief.
- And a lot of fathers know a lot about bikes and hammers, but not much about tears.
- I learned that people in churches and synagogues and places where people go to worship, sometimes know nothing at all about tears and sadness and grief.
- I learned that if you want to find people who really do know about sadness and tears, you ask a kid who is too young to lie or a grandparent who is too old.
- I learned that even with the too-young kid or too-old grandparent sometimes you have to really ask for the truth.

- I learned a very hard lesson: it's that every single person in the whole world, including me, will die someday.
- And with all the dying and sickness and terrible things that happen to every one of us, I learned that it's okay to cry and yell and be really sad and really angry and to use all my feelings.
- I learned that it's scary when grown-ups cry, but afterward they smile more and feel better.
- I learned, too, that no matter what happens that is really, really bad – it's not my fault.
- I learned that when grown-ups cry and grieve and feel bad, it's a little child inside of them who does the crying.
- I learned that every single person in the world, whether they're really big and really smart or just plain people, there's a little child who needs to hold hands when we go to the funeral home and who needs a teddy bear and most of all, needs lots and lots of hugs.