



## [Resilience Skills to Help Children Deal with Grief and Loss](#)

Ever wonder what goes on inside the mind of a grieving child who has lost a parent, sibling, or other loved one? Some children may think:

*My life is over. I will never be happy again.*

*This is all my fault.*

*Bad things always happen to me.*

*I don't care what happens to me.*

*I can't stop picturing my dad dying.*

*I'm the only one in my class without a mom.*

All of these thoughts and the many sad, frightened, and angry feelings that can accompany them are a natural part of the grieving process for children.

Children have their own individual responses to the emotional trauma of the death of a loved one. Some may be openly upset all the time and others may act like they don't care. Their reactions may vary depending upon age, the circumstances surrounding the loss, family and other support systems, as well as individual coping capabilities. Many parents, family, and friends want to know the best way to help a child who is facing a personal tragedy. One good option is for the child to be encouraged to learn resilience skills.

Resilience is what's needed after a crisis, to help a child feel better over time. While we can't change what happened, we can help children to learn smart and strong ways to deal with grief and loss. It's safe to say that resilience is something the Hello Grief community knows quite a bit about. Resilient thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are evidenced throughout the poignant articles written by teens, parents, widows, staff, and experts. Supportive resilient comments are shared by those reacting to these writings. This powerful example of resilience through disclosure, support, and validation provides an important model of how to heal after a tragedy.

We at Tool Kits for Kids also want to find ways to help children re-build their lives after suffering a major loss. We developed [the Build Up Your Resilience Tool Kit for Kids™](#) to provide emotional first-aid for kids who are facing a traumatic situation, such as the death of a parent, sibling, or other loved one. We would like to share one of our favorite resilience tools from the Elementary School Edition of the Tool Kit, for kids ages 5-11. If you like, read the tool with your child.

The resilience tool we selected from the Tool Kit is **Hide and Seek**. It's a variation of a favorite children's game, and emphasizes two essential strategies – the value of connecting with others after a loss, and the importance of allowing oneself to play and still have fun. Here is the text from the front side of the tool, which you can read with the child:



## **Hide and Seek**

Many of you know the game of *Hide and Seek*. It's fun – someone *Hides* and someone else tries to find you (that's what *Seek* means). Sometimes kids feel like hiding even when they aren't playing *Hide and Seek*. When kids feel sad or scared, they may want to Hide by themselves and not talk to anyone.

When you are going through tough times, you may think that staying away from other people will make you feel better. It never does. To help you feel better, don't *Hide*. Remember the other part of the game – *Seek*.

1. Find your friends and play. It's OK to have fun, even if you're feeling sad, guilty, scared, or angry.
2. Find time to spend with your family. Eat meals together, play a game, or watch a movie.
3. Many kids have gone through tough times too and may understand how you feel.

When you want to feel better, remind yourself, *Don't Hide. Just Seek!* ©Tool Kits for Kids LLC

The back of each tool is written for Adults (Parents and Other Helpers), explaining how to use the tool and why it is effective. Here is the back of the **Hide and Seek** tool:

### **For Adults**

After a difficult time, some children feel like staying by themselves. This is a natural feeling, but it is not a good long-term solution. Playing with others is an important part of healing for children. Even if they are reluctant, children feel better when they spend time with others. In the aftermath of a difficult situation, play gives children an opportunity to take a break from feeling bad and gives them a sense of control over something in their lives.

Make sure you spend time with the child too. Children need adults to be a steady presence. To help the child feel better, say, *Don't Hide, Just Seek!* ©Tool Kits for Kids LLC

Some people acquire resilience skills with age, experience, and wisdom. Kids who are grieving need these emotional life tools now. The good news is these skills can be learned. Teaching resilience skills is the goal of the *Build Up Your Resilience*<sup>TM</sup> Tool Kit. Children learn to handle the overwhelming feelings of sadness, loss, anger, and guilt, as well as deal with bad dreams, scary thoughts, and worries about grown-ups. Resilient children have the best chance to make a healthy adjustment to grief and loss, and still come out whole.

*Special thanks to Tool Kits for Kids creators for sharing this resource with us. Read more about resilience and Tool Kits for Kids at [www.toolkitsforkids.com](http://www.toolkitsforkids.com)*