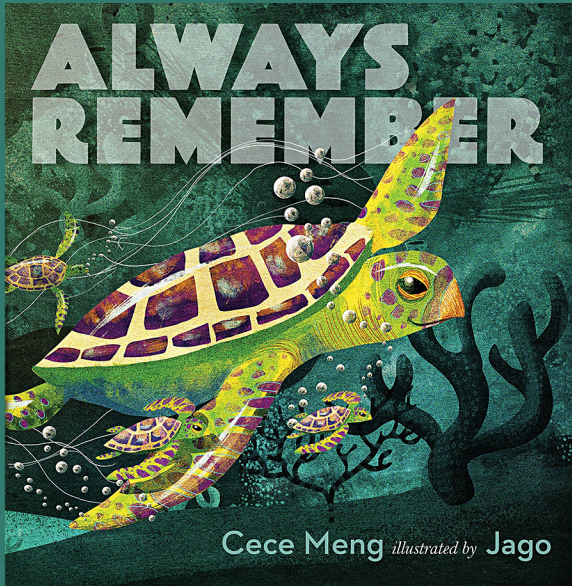


HIGHMARK CARING PLACE

Resources for Grieving Students



CECE MENG

ALWAYS REMEMBER

Always Remember is a children's book written by Cece Meng and illustrated by Jago. The story's main character Old Turtle dies and the story outlines the legacy that he leaves behind.

The book follows various sea animals as they lovingly remember how Old Turtle was part of their lives. They realize the wonderful impact he had on all of them and that they will "Always Remember" him.

MEMORY LANE ACTIVITY

The purpose of this activity is to allow grieving children that have experienced the death of someone close to them the opportunity to explore, draw and share memories about their special person that has died. The activity is best used in a peer support group setting but can also be used individually with students or as a classroom presentation (further details below). Group members will be given the opportunity to hear a story about memories, to draw and share their memories with their group members, and then the group will have the opportunity to combine their drawings/writings together to create a group collage.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Always Remember story book
- Approximately 6 feet of butcher paper or a space on a wall to tape the pieces of paper
- Markers, crayons or colored pencils
- Glue or tape
- Small pieces (approx. 3x5 or 4x6) of various colors of construction paper

SUPPORT GROUP ACTIVITY:

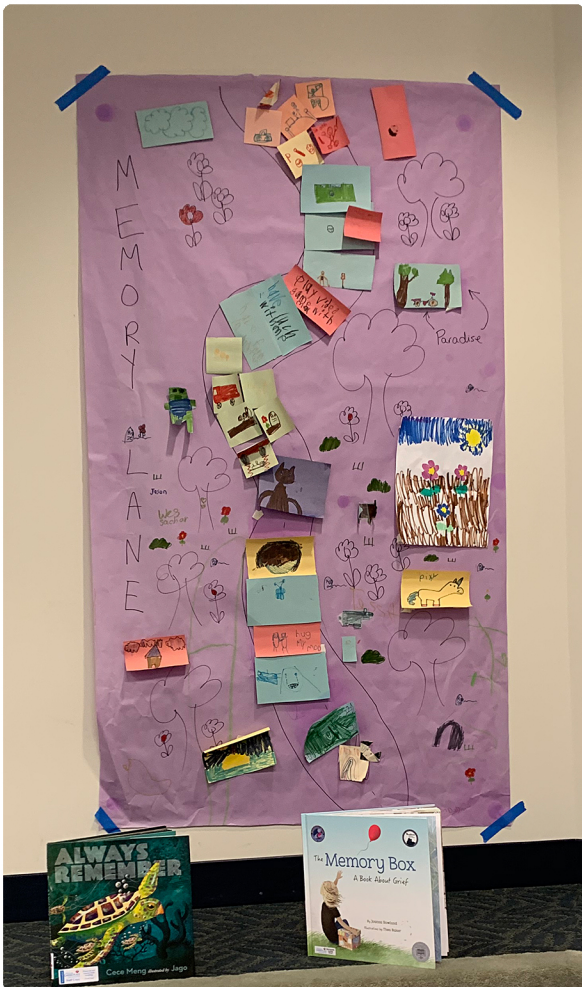
To get started, draw a path on the butcher paper prior to the group starting and then





write “Memory Lane” across the top of the paper. Hang up the butcher paper on a wall in your space. Begin the meeting by reading the story *Always Remember* to the group. Talk with the kids as the story progresses about how the other sea animals remembered their friend, Old Turtle, who has died. Some questions that might be helpful include:

1. What were some of the ways old turtle was remembered by the sea animals?
2. What are some of the traits Old Turtle had that showed he was a good friend?
3. What was your favorite memory of Old Turtle?



Upon completion of the story, talk with the group members about memories that they have about or with their person that has died. Talk about all kinds of memories — funny ones, sad ones, happy ones, scary ones, etc. and avoid asking them to share only their happy or favorite memories. Remind the group members that all different kinds of memories make up this person to you.

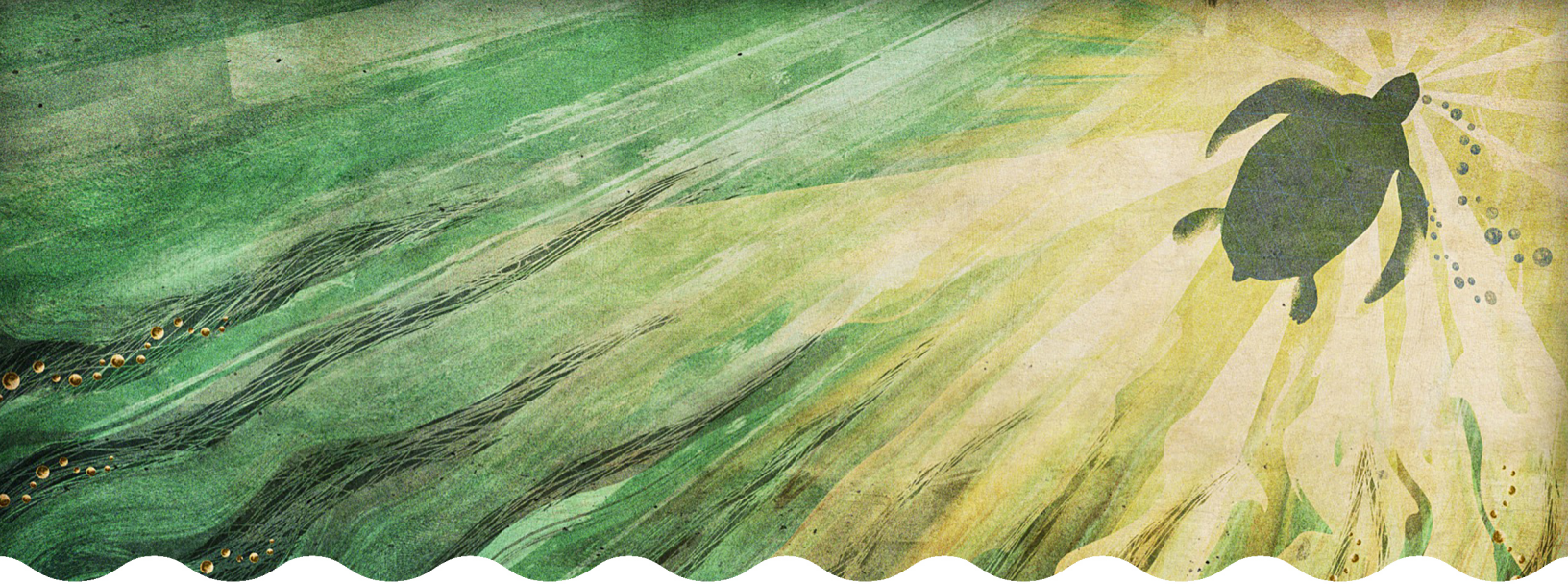
Using the small construction paper pieces, encourage the group members to draw as many memories about their special person that has died as they wish (one memory per paper). Group members may also write out the memories they have using words or in story form instead of drawing a picture if they prefer or in addition to drawings.

Give each group member the opportunity to share the drawings or writings that they have come up with. When they have finished sharing, have the group glue or tape their construction papers to the “Memory Lane” path. Ask for the kids’ feedback about their path when all of the memories have been added.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Please note that not all group members will have memories. Encourage these members to





identify individuals that they can talk with to learn more about their person that has died. Are there pictures that they have of the person? Is there a family member that they can ask questions to? Group members who do not have memories can choose to write out things they would like to know about their person that died or write things that they would like their special person to know about them.

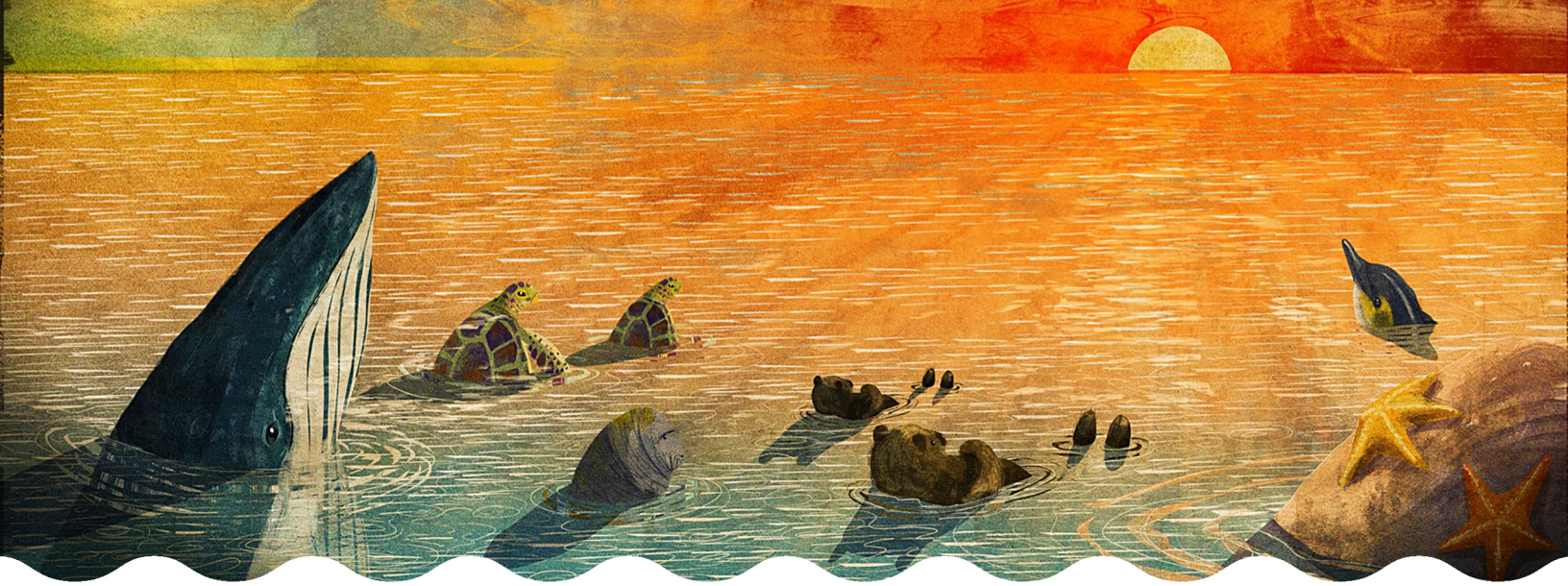
2. Please also note that some children might have unpleasant memories that they write about, i.e. memories of their loved one in the hospital, memories of their loved one using drugs, etc. Avoid asking students to just share only their happy or best memories as group members may find it helpful to share their unpleasant memories too.

ADDITIONAL WAYS TO USE THE MEMORY LANE ACTIVITY:

1. Working with a child individually? This activity can be easily modified to work with students one on one as well. Memory discussions are very important to individuals that are grieving as many children hold fears that they will forget their loved one that has died. The story is a great tool to lead a discussion on memories and instead of doing a large memory lane board you can still allow the individual student to work on their memory squares and then make a smaller “Memory Lane” for the student to glue them to.



2. This activity can also be modified to be a classroom presentation to an entire class. Before presenting, be sure to have any students identified that may be grieving the loss of someone close to them (a person or pet). It may be helpful to send home a letter ahead of time to the parents or guardians of the students in the class to let them know this presentation will occur. This may help to identify students that have had a loss and can encourage guardians to have further discussion with their child at home. The activity can follow as described above by reading the story to the class, allow for discussion time on the sea animals



and how they remembered their friend, and then allow students to make a class “Memory Lane.” The Memory Lane can include memories from students that have experienced the death of someone close to them or the death of a pet.

We know that it can be helpful for classmates that have experienced a loss to also have support from their peers. For those students that have not experienced a death, they can have the option to write down messages of support or hope to their classmates. It may be helpful to have a discussion on what you can say or do to support a peer that is grieving. Some examples of supportive messages could include “I am here for you,” “I am sad about your loss,” “I am thinking of you,” etc. When students are finished making their construction paper blocks, allow time for sharing and discussion.

