**Learning . . . Bill of Rights for Grieving Children**

**I have the right to my own unique feelings about death.** I might feel mad, sad or lonely. I might feel scared or relieved. I might feel numb or sometimes not anything at all. No one will feel exactly like I do.

**I have the right to talk about my grief whenever I feel like talking.** When I need to talk, I will find someone who will listen to me and love me. When I don’t want to talk, that’s okay, too.

**I have the right to show my feelings of grief in my own way.** When they are hurting, some kids like to play so they’ll feel better for a while. I can play or laugh, too. I might also get mad and misbehave. This does not mean I am bad. It just means I have scary feelings I need help with.

**I have the right to need other people to help me with my grief, especially grown-ups who care about me.** Mostly I need them to pay attention to what I am feeling and saying and to love me no matter what.

**I have the right to get upset about normal, everyday problems.** I might feel grumpy and have trouble getting along with others sometimes.

**I have the right to have “griefbursts.”** Griefbursts are sudden, unexpected feelings of sadness that happen to me sometimes — even long after the death. These feelings can be very strong and even scary. When this happens, I might feel afraid to be alone.

**I have the right to use my beliefs about God to help me with my grief.** Praying might make me feel better and somehow closer to the person who died.

**I have the right to try to figure out why the person I loved died.** But it’s okay if I don’t find an answer. Why questions about life and death are the hardest in the world.

**I have the right to think and talk about my memories of the person who died.** Sometimes those memories will be happy and sometimes they might be sad. Either way, memories help me keep alive my love for the person who died.

**I have the right to move forward and feel my grief over time, to heal.** I’ll go on to live a happy life, but the life and death of the person who died will always be a part of me. I’ll always miss the person who died.

Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D.