

Questions and Answers about *Rainbow Reach* and the *Rainbow Reach Book Series*



What is *Rainbow Reach*?

Rainbow Reach is an organization developed specifically to help young children cope with difficult issues such as grief, loss and anxiety. The *Rainbow Reach Series* of activity books is the primary resource of *Rainbow Reach*, and serves as a communication tool for children and adults. The activity books enable children to connect with caring adults who can help them through the grief process and back to a normal life beyond the loss they've experienced. There are currently four books in the series:

- ***Forever Friend: Activities for Kids Who Have Lost a Pet***
- ***Heroes! Activities for Kids Dealing with Deployment***
- ***Love & Memories: Activities for Kids Who Have Lost a Loved One***
- ***Worry Busters! Activities for Kids Who Worry Too Much***

How did the idea for the *Rainbow Reach Book Series* come about?

The *Rainbow Reach Book Series* began with a single title born out of what the author, Susan Weaver, knew from her own personal experience, and grew into a series based on what the children of her friends and neighbors were experiencing. When Susan searched for materials to help the children with the difficulties they were facing, she was surprised to find almost no resources available for that age group, and what she did find was limited and general in nature. So Susan decided to create her own materials to assist children in getting through these life-affecting events. Becoming a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist® further enhanced Susan's understanding of what was necessary to overcome loss and grief, and is reflected in the contents of each and every title.

Why is it important for children to grieve?

Grieving allows children to integrate losses and move on. Teaching children how to express and acknowledge thoughts and feelings, as they occur, helps them build confidence and self-esteem. It also provides the tools they need to handle difficult situations and stress throughout their lifetime.

How does adult grief differ from a child's grief?

The grieving process for adults is generally a continuous process, until the adult is ready to integrate or to hide their sorrow and move on. Children are not able to digest the magnitude of a large emotional loss all at once. They grieve a little at a time, in small increments or waves. A child may be sad and crying one moment, and the next moment the same child may be laughing and playing. Children must realize the loss slowly as it becomes a part of their daily lives.

How do the Activity Books work to help with grief or anxiety?

Receiving a *Rainbow Reach* book makes a child feel special and lets the child know that someone cares, which can make all the difference in the world. Each book helps the child identify a trusted adult with whom he or she can share concerns and emotions. The books initiate conversations that will answer a child's questions and break down the loss event into manageable pieces that are easier to digest. With plenty of space for writing and drawing, the books encourage a child to express feelings and share what's on his or her mind. Even if a child doesn't want to share initially, the workbooks serve as communication tools for parents so they can start a conversation about what has been written or drawn. The books target specific events such as the loss of a pet or deployment of a parent, so they include a clear direction for what the child is experiencing. The end result provides children with confidence in themselves and empowers them to know that they can deal with the situation better should it ever happen again.

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What is most important in helping a child through grief?

The single most important component every child needs in order to grieve is the involvement of at least one responsible adult who cares about the child. This person can explain what is happening, answer questions, and provide reassurance to the child that he or she will be safe.

Why wouldn't a parent or responsible adult know to help a grieving child?

There are several reasons why adults may overlook the needs of a grieving child:

- 1) **Lack of knowledge** – children grieve a little at a time, taking time out for play and fun. It can be difficult for adults to realize that a child is grieving because children may appear to be fine when they are actually just taking a break from the grieving process.
- 2) **Dealing with their own grief** – adults are often experiencing the same loss as the child and are overwhelmed with their own grief experience. Especially in the case of serious illness or death, it can be difficult for adults to realize that children need help.
- 3) **Unawareness** – many adults have never been taught that it's important to pay attention to or react to their own feelings, so they don't know how to acknowledge, or may underestimate, the feelings of a child who is having trouble.
- 4) **Self-involvement** – parents can be so busy and worried about what's happening in their own lives, and trying to fulfill their own needs, that it can be easy to overlook the needs of their children.
- 5) **Old beliefs** – not so long ago adults embraced the saying: "Children should be seen and not heard." Worrying about what children feel is a relatively new concept for many adults who were not raised with these values. It's an educational process and a hope at *Rainbow Reach* that the book series will create an awareness in parents and adults who may not realize the needs of a grieving child.

What can happen when children are unable to grieve, and instead suppress their feelings following loss or death?

The consequences of repressed feelings may not be obvious immediately. It can take days, weeks, or even months before a child shows any adverse signs, when all of a sudden the child may start acting out for no apparent reason. For others, the repressed feelings don't show up until they cause emotional problems later in life. Unexpressed feelings of grief and loss can lead to secondary losses such as loss of trust, security, or safety. If children feel that no one cares about them or will listen to them, they are likely to develop low levels of self-esteem and bad self-images that can have consequences well into adulthood.

Who are the books for?

The books are written for children ages 4-14, but can be helpful for teenagers and even adults in dealing with loss and grief.

What do children need in order to complete the activities in the books?

All that is needed to begin one of the activity books is any type of coloring or writing tool like a pencil, pen, colored pencil or crayon. The books begin by helping the child to identify a trusted adult that he or she can work with to complete the activities.

What tools and resources are available on the *Rainbow Reach* website?

- **Books and Gift Sets** – while the books are available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) (\$13.95 each) – there are gift sets available only on [RainbowReach.com](https://www.RainbowReach.com). The 'Gift Bundle' (\$16.95) includes Crayola® Colored Pencils with each activity book; the 'Gift Box' (\$25.95) includes Crayola® Colored Pencils, Markers, and a 'Color Me' Tablet with blank pages which works great if there are multiple children in a family who are working in the same book.

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- **Relaxation Exercises** – developed by Dr. Terry Orlick to teach children positive living skills such as how to relax or channel feelings of anger. *Spaghetti Toes* is one of the most popular exercises, introducing the concept of stress and relaxation by having children ‘tense up’ and pretend they’re hard, uncooked spaghetti. Then the children learn to ‘let go’ so their muscles feel like soft, cooked spaghetti. This is a great way to help children learn the difference between stress and relaxation, and to appreciate how good it feels to relax. There are thirteen exercises – seven for younger children and six for older children. Each includes instructions for adults as well as audio tracks that can be downloaded for the children.
- **Grief Recovery Programs** – there is access to two programs on the website: *Helping Children Deal With Loss*, an educational study group for adults that provides practical guidance on how to help children deal with death, divorce, pet loss, moving, and other losses; and the *Grief Recovery Method® Outreach Program* which guides adults who wish to resolve their loss issues and move beyond their grief to a richer quality of life. Both programs are led by certified grief recovery specialists. The site includes a Specialist Finder so anyone can locate programs offered within their geographical range in the United States or Canada.
- **Bookmarks** – available free to therapists, counselors and other professionals who have clients, patients, parents or students who may benefit from using one of the *Rainbow Reach Series*’ books. The bookmarks include a brief description of each book and provide information on where the books can be purchased.
- **Outside Resources** – the National Bereavement Resource Guide listing camps and grief organizations in every state for parents or adults wanting more information. This information is provided by The New York Life Foundation and The Moyer Foundation.
- **Charities** – *Rainbow Reach* commits 5% of pre-tax profits from the website to support the following charities associated with each book:
 - ◆ *Forever Friend* – proceeds benefit the *American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)*
 - ◆ *Love & Memories* – proceeds benefit *St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital*
 - ◆ *Heroes!* – proceeds benefit the *Wounded Warrior Project*
 - ◆ *Worry Busters!* – proceeds benefit the *Anxiety Disorders Association of America (ADAA)*

What’s next for *Rainbow Reach* and the *Rainbow Reach Book Series*?

Rainbow Reach is working on additional titles for the book series to include children dealing with divorce and bullying, and also a book to help children learn about identifying and handling their emotions. *Rainbow Reach* has received requests to produce books for older children of middle school and high school age, and these are also possibilities.

Additional questions?

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