

Frida Kahlo's Childhood

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FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL
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NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL
CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL



Hola Frida

A film directed by Karine Vézina and André Kadi

Written by Anne Bryan, Sophie Faucher, Émilie Gabrielle and André Kadi

With the voices of Layla Tuy-Sok, Gaëlle Serra, Oscar Vaillancourt, Lucinda Davis and Marcel Jeannin

Produit par Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Scénario et réalisation de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Musique de Karine Vézina. Montage de Karine Vézina. Production exécutive de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Distribution de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Coproduction de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien financier de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien technique de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien matériel de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien moral de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien logistique de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien administratif de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien juridique de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien financier de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien technique de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien matériel de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien moral de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien logistique de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien administratif de Karine Vézina et André Kadi. Soutien juridique de Karine Vézina et André Kadi.

Logo of various production and distribution companies, including Udo, Cinéma 16, and others.

holafrida-lefilm.com/en

Maison43.com

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS,
TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS**
RESILIENCE

Hola Frida

*This is the story of a little girl who is different.
Her world is Coyoacán, Mexico.
Sparkling, vibrant, everything interests her.
And when trials arise, she faces them with an
overflowing imagination.
The little girl is called Frida Kahlo!*

Storytelling is a powerful tool for promoting understanding, fostering connection, and building empathy. Inspired by the youth of the iconic Mexican artist, the film *Hola Frida* serves as a compelling medium to raise awareness about the realities of difference, illness, isolation, disability, harassment, the importance of inclusion, and the transformative powers of imagination and resilience. By highlighting Frida Kahlo's childhood, the film offers a parallel to the challenges children face around the world and how they can overcome them.

We designed this practical guide for parents and teachers to delve deeper into situations related to the film and provide them with tools to address these topics in a positive way, focusing on resilience.

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Throughout History Overview

Worksheet 1

The foundations of resilience

Frida-of-Coyoacan-of-coyotes

At Casa Azul, Frida is busy with her presentation. On her way to school, her drawing goes flying. Will the clever wind and the sudden pain in her leg allow her to catch it in time?

Themes: Introduction to Frida's life, first sign of leg pain.

DEVELOPING A SOCIAL NETWORK

BALANCING STABILITY AND CHANGE

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Worksheet 2

Resilience in the face of injury or illness

Frida-soon-to-get-better

A new reality enters Frida's life: illness. Frida escapes her pain by taking refuge in her imaginary world and meets a mysterious friend.

Themes: Illness, boredom, isolation, opening up to the imaginary world.

MANAGING STRESS

IMAGINATION AS A TOOL OF RESILIENCE

Worksheet 3

Building long-term resilience

Frida-multicolor

Frida's sick of being sick. With the help of her family and her friend, she manages to bring color back into her day.

Themes: Convalescence, boredom, realization of her new reality, anger, support from friends and family, introduction to art.

BREAKING ISOLATION

HOPE, PATIENCE AND MOTIVATION

Worksheet 4

Resilience in the face of bullying (part 1)

Frida-who-has-wings

Frida can finally go back to school. On the playground, her disability provokes unexpected reactions.

Themes: Return to routine, others' reaction to difference, bullying, harassment, change of perspective (play, imagination).

WHAT TO DO WITH A BULLIED CHILD?

Worksheet 5

Resilience in the face of bullying (part 2)

Frida-on-the-move

Frida, back in shape and full of energy, takes part in the neighborhood's big roller-skating race. It's not going to be without its challenges, but it's going to be a good opportunity to put her nose to the grindstone.

Themes: Physical challenge, overcoming self-doubt, lack of confidence, bullying.

WHAT TO DO WITH A CHILD WHO BULLIES?

Worksheet 6

Resilience in the face of loss and bereavement

Frida-viva-la-vida!

As her family prepares for the famous Day of the Dead, Frida realizes she has something very special to celebrate too.

Themes: The Day of the Dead, a family celebration to give thanks and say goodbye to illness.

ANNOUNCING THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

PREPARING A CHILD FOR LOSS

ACCOMPANYING A CHILD THROUGH LOSS OR BEREAVEMENT

Worksheet 1

The foundations of resilience

Frida-of-Coyoacan-of-coyotes

At Casa Azul, Frida is busy with her presentation. On the way to school, her drawing flies off. Will the clever wind and the sudden pain in her leg enable her to catch it in time?

Themes

Introduction to Frida's life, first sign of leg pain.

Thematic sheet

DEVELOPING A SOCIAL NETWORK

BALANCING STABILITY AND CHANGE

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Unfortunately, life is inevitably marked by challenging moments. Sooner or later, each of us will face the need to overcome difficulties by demonstrating **resilience** - that is, the ability **to adapt** in the face of adversity and tough times.¹ Moreover, according to Boris Cyrulnik, resilience is "a biological, psycho-affective, social, and cultural process that enables new **development** after psychological trauma."²

For a child to develop resilience, some elements need to be in place. Think of a house: without a **solid foundation**, the house is less likely to resist the elements.

Developing a social network

To cope with adversity, great stress or a traumatic event, children need to be well surrounded. During difficult events, they need to feel **listened** to and **supported** by people they trust, to prevent them from isolating themselves. A parent, teacher or educators must ensure



that the child has someone he or she can trust to talk to, so that he or she can get the help and support he or she needs.

Balancing stability and change

Certain events will force the child to alter their plans, routine, and even dreams. In such cases, they must accept these changes and adapt. To do so, they first need to feel a sense of **stability** in their life, which will then provide them with the confidence needed **to move forward**.



Taking care of yourself

The principle of a healthy mind in a healthy body also applies to resilience. Adopting healthy **physical** and **psychological** habits makes the body more resistant to stress.

- 1 Resilience. American Psychological Association. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience>
- 2 Cyrulnik, Boris (2012). Why resilience? In: *Résilience et connaissances de base*. Odile Jacob.

TEACHERS / EDUCATORS TIP WORKSHEET

How can I concretely help students develop their social network?

- Prefer activities or exercises in **sub-groups**. If possible, diversify groups from time to time.
- Organize **social activities**. They're the perfect opportunity to develop links between students, and between you and them. *For example: a get-to-know-you activity, a board game lunch, a potluck, a sleep-over, etc.*
- **If a student seems more isolated**, point out the interests he or she has in common with other students, then put them in touch by highlighting their common interests.

How can we create stability in the school that makes it easier to accept change?

- Make **occasional changes** to the classroom routine, while respecting it. It's important, however, to respect the special needs of some students in terms of their rigidity in the face of routine and their tolerance for change. *For example: from time to time, change the seating arrangements in class or introduce a new surprise activity.*
- **Support** students during moments of adjustment: listen to their concerns and emotions, reassure them, help them find their own way to adapt.

How can we teach students the importance of taking care of themselves?

- Teach the benefits of **healthy lifestyle habits**. *For example, hold workshops on the importance of being active, eating well, staying hydrated and sleeping well.*
- Encourage students to get **moving**. For example, take short breaks in class so students can get up and stretch their legs.
- Teach students how to **understand** and **express their emotions** in a healthy way, using the following formula: *When (context)... I feel (emotion)... because (reason)... so I'd like to (solution).*

For more information on resilience, watch the following video:

RC Archives (2021). In 2004, Boris Cyrulnik explains what resilience is at different stages of life. Youtube.
<https://youtu.be/b1ktHy22SIM?si=PY2Fe8vtCpskD1GT>

PARENT TIP WORKSHEET

How can I develop my child's social network?

- Help your child **develop a bond** with siblings or other family members. Organize activities, games or outings to spend quality time together.
- **Get in touch** with other parents in the neighborhood or at school to help children socialize.
- Encourage my child to participate in **an extra-curricular** group activity of his/her choice. *For example: a sport, dance class, music class, martial arts class, etc.*

How can I help my child find a balance between stability and change?

- Establish a **stable**, but **not rigid, routine** by introducing and accepting a few changes to the schedule or routine, depending on your child's level of tolerance for change. *For example: a new activity, new seating at the table, cooking a new recipe, etc.*
- Find **ways to adapt**: ask your child about possible ways of adapting to an unexpected situation that requires you or your child to adapt, in order to develop resourcefulness and independence. If necessary, guide him towards a possible solution. Here's an example:

You get into your car to take your child to school, but the car won't start. Rather than choosing a solution individually, you ask your child, "*What do you think we should do?*" If he can't come up with a solution, you ask, "*Should I call someone?*" or "*Do you think someone could help us?*"

How can I teach my child the importance of taking care of himself?

- Promote **healthy lifestyle habits**: get moving, eat well, stay hydrated and get enough sleep!
- Teach your child **healthy ways** of expressing emotions and reinforce the use of the following formula: *When (context)... I feel (emotion)... because (reason)... so I'd like to (solution).*
- **Lead by example!** Take time for yourself and look after your mental health. If your child is aware that you're going through a difficult situation, talk about it and mention the ways in which you're seeking help.

For more information on resilience, watch the following video:

RC Archives (2021). In 2004, Boris Cyrulnik explains what resilience is at different stages of life. Youtube.
<https://youtu.be/b1ktHy22SIM?si=PY2Fe8vtCpskD1GT>

Worksheet 2

Resilience in the face of injury or illness

Frida-who-will-soon-be-better

A new reality enters Frida's life: illness. She escapes her pain by taking refuge in her imaginary world and meets a mysterious friend.

Themes

Illness, boredom, isolation, imagination.

Thematic sheet

MANAGING STRESS

IMAGINATION AS A TOOL OF RESILIENCE

When a child or a loved one is faced with an **injury** or **illness**, the child is likely to experience a period of great stress and negative emotions. Indeed, these are particularly **destabilizing** events for children, who don't always fully understand what they are and the adaptation they require. If they do understand the meaning, the breaks in routine and the unpredictable elements that follow will in turn create **insecurity** and **stress** in the child.



Managing stress

Injuries and illnesses can raise a number of **questions** which, when left unanswered, can lead to stress: "What exactly is this all about? When can I expect to return to normal life? What will be the after-effects? What

impact will it have on my life? To foster **resilience**, the child needs to have enough information to understand the situation, but not too much, too complex or too many details. He must learn to use healthy **stress management** methods.

Imagination as a tool of resilience

Children are full of **imagination**. This is usually used by children to have fun, but it can also be used to **understand** more abstract concepts and to help **manage the emotions** that arise from them. Imagination can then be used to personify or objectify an illness or injury, to give it a more **concrete** meaning. It can also be used to project into the future and to imagine a time when the person will be healed, serving as a source of **motivation**.



TEACHERS / EDUCATORS TIP WORKSHEET

- **Teach** students emotion management and relaxation **methods** (e.g. in the form of workshops), and use **positive reinforcement** when they use them.
- Take the time to **understand** the student's **concerns** and **needs**. Respect his or her choice of whether or not to discuss certain things with you, while ensuring that he or she can talk to someone else he or she trusts.
- Give the student some **responsibility**. This is a simple way to give them back a sense of control over their lives.
- **Inform** parents of the resources available to them.

PARENT TIP WORKSHEET

How can I help my child manage stress?

- Ask your child about his or her concerns, questions and needs, then respond with clarity and honesty.
- Acknowledge and accept their emotions. Be reassuring and understanding.
- Watch for signs of anxiety or depression in your child (*difficulty sleeping, changes in appetite, irritability, decrease in usual interests, etc.*³). If these difficulties alter his or her functioning or create psychological distress, consult a professional.

How can I use my child's imagination to help him better understand what's going on?

- **To better understand the situation:** if, after explaining the situation using real terms, it represents too abstract a concept for the child, you can help him or her to illustrate the characteristics of the injury or illness with an image, while keeping as close to reality as possible. For example, to explain a tumor, you might say: "*There's a little lump in her tummy that's getting bigger and bigger, so the doctor's going to have to go and remove it for you to get better.*"
- **To prepare for the future:** encourage the child to visualize the next steps in the process of recovering or adapting to illness.

³ *Stress and anxiety in your child or teenager.* Government of Quebec. Retrieved from <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/mental-health/mental-health-in-children-and-adolescents/anxiety-in-children-and-adolescents>

Worksheet 3

Demonstrating long-term resilience

Frida-multicolor

Frida's sick of being sick. With the help of her family and her friend Tonito, she manages to bring color back into her day.

Themes

Convalescence, boredom, anger, support from family and friends, introduction to art.

Thematic sheet

BREAKING ISOLATION

**HOPE, PATIENCE AND
MOTIVATION**

In many contexts, resilience requires a great deal of **patience**. When a child is faced with a difficult situation full of unfamiliar elements, or one that extends over a long period of time, as in the case of an illness, it is normal for him or her to experience **discouragement** sooner or later. However, when this discouragement becomes too great, it can have an impact on the child's mood and motivation in various spheres of his or her life and, ultimately, can become a major obstacle to resilience.

Breaking the isolation

In these circumstances, the child may no longer be able to participate in certain daily activities, such as after-school or family activities. The child may even be unable to attend school for some time. The child then finds himself **cut off** from his social network, for a long period filled with **uncertainty** and **questioning**. Since this isolation can undermine his resilience, the child needs to feel **supported** by those around him.

Hope, patience and motivation

According to the Larousse dictionary, **hope** is waiting for something with confidence. **Patience** is the ability to persevere without becoming discouraged. **Motivation** is the reasons, interests and elements that drive someone to act. These are the three key principles for fostering **resilience** when a child experiences a difficult situation over a long period.



TEACHERS / EDUCATORS TIP WORKSHEET

How can I break a student's isolation?

- If appropriate, create a project to encourage other students to **show their support**. For example: a get-well or get-well card, or a craft.
- Inform parents about **resources available** in the community. For example: a peer help center, psychological or financial assistance.
- If possible, use **technology** to help the student participate in school life and keep in touch with loved ones.

How can we foster hope, patience and motivation?

- Ask the student about the **reasons** and **interests** that motivate him to **persevere**, to get through this ordeal (especially when he seems motivated). When they become discouraged, a reminder of these elements can help them regain their motivation.
- Let the student experience **successes** and **happy** moments. Encourage them to enjoy themselves despite difficult moments, and make them aware of these moments.

PARENT TIP WORKSHEET

How can I prevent my child from becoming isolated?

- Use **technology** to keep my child in touch with family and friends, and to take part in activities. For example: calls, videoconferencing, social networking, distance learning and activities.
- If possible, encourage or organize **visits** from loved ones at home and involve them in **activities**.

How can we foster hope, patience and motivation?

- Show your child that there's more to life than this difficult event or situation. Make them aware of the **positive** elements in their lives, their **strengths** and **qualities**.
- Demonstrate **confidence** in your child's resilience, so that he or she believes it too: *you can do it!*
- If your child has no power over the situation, help him or her find a way of **expressing** anger, frustration or grief that is **unique to him or her**. For example, through art or sport.



Worksheet 4

Resilience in the face of bullying

Part 1: The bullied child

Frida-who-has-wings

Frida, who is no longer ill, can finally go back to school. On the playground, her disability provokes unexpected reactions.

Themes

Return to routine, others' reaction to difference, bullying, harassment, change of perspective (play, imagination).

Thematic sheet

**WHAT TO DO WITH A
BULLIED CHILD?**

Unfortunately, **bullying** is still a widespread phenomenon, especially among young people. For those who fall victim to it, it can have many **consequences**, such as loss of self-esteem, depression and other mental health problems. Children who commit these acts also deserve help, as they are often signs of **psychological distress**. To deal with bullying, resilience is essential.

First of all, what is bullying?⁴

In short, a situation can be characterized as bullying when the following **characteristics** are present:

1. Unequal power relations
2. Deliberate gesture with intent to harm or do harm
3. Generally repetitive nature of the acts performed
4. Harmful consequences for the victim

It can take the form of **verbal, social, physical** or **cyberbullying**.

It involves a **dynamic** between three parties: the person(s) being bullied, the person(s) doing the bullying and the person(s) witnessing the bullying. In order to stop bullying, the point of view of each of these parties must be taken into account.

This fact worksheet focuses more specifically on children who are **victims of bullying**. It offers some advice on what to do and what not to do in such a situation, in order to avoid the consequences.

⁴ Information guide for parents on violence and bullying at school. Fondation Jasmin Roy et Fondation Desjardins. p. 13. <https://fondationjasminroy.com/en/initiative/information-guide-for-parents-on-school-violence-and-bullying/>



What to do with a child who is being bullied? Steps for parents, teachers and educators

- ① **Talk to each party individually and impartially:** on the child's side, try to find out his or her point of view on the situation.
- ② **Help the child to understand the other's point of view:** explain the other's reasons for bullying, while confirming that he or she didn't deserve it.
- ③ **Intervene:** tell the child that he shouldn't keep the situation to himself, and reassure him that an intervention will be put in place.
- ④ **Encourage mutual respect:** ask the child how the other person can make things right. It's also a good idea to point out what the child and the other person have in common, so that they can develop mutual respect.
- ⑤ **Long-term follow-up:** After the intervention, it's important to follow up with the child to make sure the situation doesn't recur.

TEACHERS / EDUCATORS TIP WORKSHEET

- Before intervening, **determine whether the situation is one of conflict or bullying**, since each requires a different response. In the case of **conflict**, the balance of power is equal and is caused by a disagreement, a difference of opinion or perception with no intention of causing harm. By getting children to apologize or explain things to each other, they come to an agreement. In the case of **bullying**, an adult must intervene to get the child to make amends, since the balance of power between them is unequal⁵.
- **Report** to parents as interventions are made.
- Teach **positive assertiveness**: for students who are victims of bullying, this is a way of defending themselves in the face of these actions, which translates into denunciation.
- On a daily basis, **emphasize** each student's strengths and normalize their faults or differences. Encourage students to see the **beauty** in each other.

PARENT TIP WORKSHEET

- Teach **positive assertiveness**: for your child, it's a way of standing up for him or herself in the face of these acts, which translates into denunciation.
- **Work as a team**: collaborate with the teachers and support staff at your child's school to prevent the situation from recurring. When your child informs you of a bullying situation, quickly contact the school principal and make an appointment to discuss the situation in person.
- Don't pass **judgment** on a child who bullies in front of your child or, if applicable, school staff.
- **Reinforce self-esteem**: emphasize your child's strengths and qualities. Normalize the presence of flaws, which can be found in any individual.

⁵ For more information, see pages 17 to 19 of the *Guide d'information aux parents sur la violence et l'intimidation à l'école*. Fondation Jasmin Roy and Fondation Desjardins. <https://fondationjasminroy.com/en/initiative/information-guide-for-parents-on-school-violence-and-bullying/>

Worksheet 5

Resilience in the face of bullying

Part 2: The bullying child

Frida-on-the-move

Frida, back in shape, takes part in the neighborhood's big roller-skating race. It won't be without its challenges, but it will be an opportunity to defy them.

Themes

Physical challenge, surpassing oneself, lack of confidence, bullying.

Thematic sheet

WHAT TO DO WITH A CHILD WHO BULLIES?

Unfortunately, **bullying** is still a widespread phenomenon, especially among young people. For those who fall victim to it, it can have many **consequences**, such as loss of self-esteem, depression and other mental health problems. Children who commit these acts also deserve help, as they are often signs of **psychological distress**. To deal with bullying, resilience is essential.

First of all, what is bullying?*

In short, a situation can be characterized as bullying when the following **characteristics** are present:

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It can take the form of **verbal, social, physical** or **cyberbullying**.

It involves a **dynamic** between three parties: the person(s) being bullied, the person(s) doing the bullying and the person(s) witnessing the bullying. In order to stop bullying, the point of view of each must be taken into account.

This fact sheet focuses on children who bully. It offers some advice on what to do and what not to do in such a situation, to help children see the consequences of their actions and find a healthier way of interacting with others.

⁶ Information guide for parents on violence and bullying at school. Fondation Jasmin Roy et Fondation Desjardins. p. 13. <https://fondationjasminroy.com/en/initiative/information-guide-for-parents-on-school-violence-and-bullying/>



What to do with a child who bullies? Steps for parents, teachers and educators

- ① **Talk to each party individually and impartially:** on the bully's side, try to find out his or her **point of view** without adopting an accusatory tone, to prevent him or her from shutting down. Ask the child about his or her **motives** and help him or her identify them.
- ② **Help the child understand the other person's point of view:** explain the thoughts and emotions his or her actions have caused the victim. Encourage them to put themselves in the other person's shoes, and to show empathy.
- ③ **Intervene:** Identify the child's unacceptable behavior and suggest alternative, more appropriate and positive behaviors. Get the child to verbalize his wrongs and name the behaviors he intends to use from now on.
- ④ **Develop mutual respect:** offer to make amends in a way that suits the victim. It's also a good idea to point out the things he has in common with the other child, so that they can develop mutual respect.
- ⑤ **Long-term follow-up:** After the intervention, it's important to follow up with the child to make sure the situation doesn't recur.

TEACHERS / EDUCATORS TIP WORKSHEET

- Before intervening, **determine whether the situation is one of conflict or bullying**, since each requires a different response. In the case of **conflict**, the balance of power is equal and is caused by a disagreement, a difference of opinion or perception with no intention of causing harm. By getting children to apologize or explain things to each other, they come to an agreement. In the case of **bullying**, an adult must intervene to get the child to make amends, since the balance of power between them is unequal.⁷
- Teaching **positive assertiveness**: this involves teaching students positive ways of asserting their needs and communicating their dissatisfactions.
- **Work as a team**: discuss the situation with other educators and with parents, to get a better understanding of the situation, identify issues and find solutions. Report to parents when interventions are implemented.
- **Avoid the “bully” label**: rather than labeling the child as a bully, focus on addressing his or her unacceptable behaviors, teaching expected **positive** behaviors and **reinforcing** them when they occur.
- **Prevention is better than cure!** On a daily basis, promote and teach empathy, kindness and acceptance of difference. In addition, with student participation, design rules that foster a positive relational climate in the classroom, then choose and apply logical consequences when rules are broken.

PARENT TIP WORKSHEET

- Rather than applying punishment alone, focus on **teaching positive behaviors** to replace bullying behaviors and **reinforce** the child when he or she adopts them.
- Teaching **positive assertiveness**: this involves teaching your child positive ways of asserting his needs and communicating his dissatisfactions.
- **Work with** the other child’s teachers, educators or parents to find ways to prevent the situation from recurring.
- **Set an example**: use **positive, non-discriminatory** language on a daily basis. If you have concerns or dissatisfactions, share them in a civilized and respectful way.
- If, after intervention, my child shows no emotion or remorse for his or her actions, seek **professional** help.

⁷ For more information, see pages 17 to 19 of the *Guide d’information aux parents sur la violence et l’intimidation à l’école*. Fondation Jasmin Roy and Fondation Desjardins <https://fondationjasminroy.com/en/initiative/information-guide-for-parents-on-school-violence-and-bullying/>

Worksheet 6

Resilience in the face of loss and grief

Frida-viva-la-vida!

As her family prepares for the famous Day of the Dead, Frida realizes that she too has something very special to celebrate.

Themes

The Day of the Dead, a family celebration to give thanks and say goodbye to illness.

Thematic sheet

ANNOUNCING THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

PREPARING A CHILD FOR LOSS

ACCOMPANYING A CHILD THROUGH LOSS OR BEREAVEMENT

In Mexican culture, the Day of the Dead (***Día de Muertos***) is a tradition for showing love and respect to deceased family members. This day has a festive and joyful connotation. As Frida demonstrates, it's a colorful celebration during which it's customary to make offerings to departed loved ones.⁸

Sooner or later, everyone will be confronted with the death of a loved one, and will have to adapt to it by mourning. As early as childhood, a person may experience the **mourning** of a loved one, or may experience the **loss** of, for example, a pet.

Grief and loss⁹

Grief is a state. It's everything we experience when **someone close to us dies**, including emotions, behaviors, thoughts, reactions, physical conditions and so on. This is a normal process that is experienced differently from one person to another. However, if the child's reactions become increasingly **strong** and **prolonged**, and his or her functioning is affected (sleep, eating, school life and social life), it is advisable to consult a professional. **Losses** can occur in a variety of contexts, such as disappearance, serious illness, parental separation, friendship breakdown or moving house.

How do you tell a child about the death of a loved one?

Ideally, the announcement should be made by a **parent**. If this is not possible, it should be made by a significant and trusted person, following these **tips**:

- Make the announcement as soon as possible, in a calm, safe place, with as few onlookers as possible.
- If the announcement must also be made to siblings, do so at the same time.
- Use the right words (death, illness), simply and directly.
- Check that the child understands what is being explained and, if necessary, reframe certain details with truth and precision.

8 Ward, L. (2022). *Día de Los Muertos: ten things to know about Mexico's Festival of the Dead*. National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.fr/histoire/2022/10/dia-de-los-muertos-dix-choses-a-savoir-sur-la-fete-des-morts-au-mexique>

9 Supporting young people experiencing loss (conference). Youth mourning.

TEACHERS / EDUCATORS TIP WORKSHEET

How do you support a student experiencing a loss?

- Give them **the opportunity to talk about it:** open the door so they can share their emotions and concerns.
- If the student doesn't want to talk about his loss, encourage him to find an **alternative way** of expressing his emotions, such as drawing. Help students **regulate** their emotions.
- When appropriate, talk about a similar event in **your life** and the **ways** in which it helped you to cope with the loss, enabling the student to **identify** with you.

After the death of a loved one, the student may be absent from school for some time. How can I encourage a positive return to school?

- **Respect** the child's choices regarding the information he or she wishes to share with others. Offer your support.
- If he or she broaches the subject, aim to understand the child's **needs**, since every bereavement is different.
- **Be there for them:** listen, take their mind off things, answer their questions.
- **Inform** parents of available resources, as needed.
- **Upon the child's return, monitor** his **reactions** (intensity, frequency) and their **impact** on his functioning. Inform parents if you notice a change. If necessary, use a calendar, diary or emotion thermometer.



PARENT TIP WORKSHEET

What to do when a loss can be prepared for?

- **Inform** the child of the situation, so that he or she doesn't have to guess. *For example: "Next year, you'll have to change schools".*
- **Ask** the child what he or she would like to know, and update the child accordingly. Open the door so he can share his emotions and concerns. *For example: "Would you prefer to be kept informed of the progress of Grandma's illness, or to have your questions answered in due course?"*
- **Involve** the child in the process by respecting his or her needs and limits, without putting the weight of the situation on the child's shoulders. *For example: "How would you like to decorate your new room?"*

How do I talk to my child about death?

- **Answer** questions clearly, using **consistent, clear** language.
- Once the facts are established, appeal to the child's **beliefs**. These will do him good. *For example: mention that you believe Grandma is in heaven, because that comforts you, and ask him if he also has comforting beliefs.*
- **If my child doesn't want to talk to me about his grief**, respect his choice while not avoiding the subject (for example, by talking about your own grief) and encourage him to find an **alternative way** of expressing his emotions, such as drawing.

Then, how can you facilitate a return to "normal" life?

- Ask the child about his **needs** and **concerns** regarding his new daily life, including his return to school. For example, what they want to say or not say publicly, and to whom.
- Adapt the **family routine** with the child, including any necessary adjustments following the death of a loved one, while respecting the child's rhythm.
- **Encourage** the child to continue his **activities** and maintain his **social network**. When he's ready, he needs to understand that life goes on despite the difficult event, and that it's still filled with many positive things.
- **Keep an eye** on your child's reactions (intensity, frequency) and their **impact** on his functioning, and consult a professional if necessary. If necessary, use an emotional calendar, diary or thermometer.

Cross-functional themes

Adopting a positive outlook

Despite her initial reluctance, Frida practises perceiving beauty in her illness. She gives color back to the photo of her ill and transforms her splint into a flower stalk, which helps her to accept her illness. Those close to her make her aware of her strengths, skills and qualities, and offer her their support. These elements encourage him to adopt a positive outlook on life.

A child who adopts such a vision will have greater self-confidence, be more resilient, and be better equipped to face challenges. This positive vision involves becoming aware of one's qualities and accepting one's faults. It is also developed by focusing on the positive aspects of your life and practicing appreciation of them, as well as by looking to the future.

1. Building on the child's strengths, skills and qualities

To help children become aware of their strengths, skills and qualities, the people around them need to emphasize them. It's also important to teach them to accept themselves as they are, with their faults.

GUILLERMO: No, Frida! You're not like the others, and that's what makes you exceptional. Whatever you do, we'll always be proud of you, Frida.

IMAGINARY FRIEND: You'll always find someone who doesn't like one of your drawings, the way you sing or dance. Some people are so sad they can't stand to see others happy. Does it really matter what that boy thinks of you?

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Reinforce behaviors that demonstrate a positive attitude, no matter how small, by praising the child.
- Give the child a concrete example of a time when he or she was able to cope with a difficult or stressful situation with a positive attitude in the past, to raise awareness of his or her coping skills

TIPS FOR TEACHERS / EDUCATORS

- Create a caring environment by promoting the uniqueness of each student.
- Normalize flaws and differences, and encourage students to accept their own as well as others'.

2. Focus on other positive aspects of life:

Avoid making the child's life revolve around negative aspects by giving them too much importance. Instead, emphasize the positive aspects that are part of her daily life, especially those that stem from the child's situation. For example, during her convalescence, Frida receives a lot of love and support from her classmates.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Discuss other topics with the child, without ignoring the problem, and do fun activities with the child to take his mind off things.

GUILLERMO: Frida, if you're not too busy, I could use your help! (...) Come and meet me in the workshop!

TIPS FOR TEACHERS / EDUCATORS

- Provide an opportunity for students to show their support and encouragement for a classmate.

TONITO: It's from our class... They've all written a little note... (...) Without you, class isn't as much fun... We can't wait for you to come back...

3. Look to the future:

Explain to the child that the difficult event or situation is not permanent and that the future is better, or at least that he or she will grow out of it. Focus on the positive aspects of his current life, but also of his future life.

FRIDA (continues): Every ordeal has been a lesson, every burst of laughter a victory over pain. I've discovered an inner strength, luminous and indomitable. And even if it hasn't always been easy, I've loved my life deeply.



Calming the child's worries

From the very first symptoms of polio, Frida wonders what's happening to her. As the disease progresses. Other worries surface: will I ever get better? When will I be able to go back to school and see my friends? Will my leg return to its normal size?

The worries that result from a difficult event or a period of great change can manifest themselves in different ways in a child. For example, they may feel¹⁰:

- Headaches or stomach aches
- Refusal to go to school
- Irritability or restlessness
- Insomnia, nightmares or fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Isolation

To calm a child's worries, we must first take the time to understand what he or she really needs, and then respond accordingly: does the child want to be reassured? Does he have trouble understanding certain aspects of an event or situation? Does he want to find a solution to a problem? Does he just need to be listened to?

What's more, children need to feel the support of their loved ones, but they also need to understand that life goes on, to prevent their anxiety from multiplying.



¹⁰ Ouellet, H. *Fiche psychosociale - Le stress chez l'enfant de 6 à 12 ans*. Quebec Ministry of Health and Social Services. Government of Quebec. Retrieved from : https://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/msss/fichiers/2009/09-235-12F_03.pdf

1. Identify the need behind the worry:

TIPS FOR PARENTS	TIPS FOR TEACHERS / EDUCATORS
<p>→ When your child shows signs of anxiety, think about the situations or events that may be the cause. Ask the child about the subject and how he or she would like to be helped to calm his or her worries. It's important to take the time to understand the situation and the child's needs, so that you can respond to them.</p>	<p>→ Be on the lookout for signs of stress in students. When these signs are present, communicate with parents to share and gather information. This collaboration will make it easier to find ways of calming the child's worries. Ask the child about his worries, and listen to his needs.</p>

2. Meeting a need...

... to be listened to and/or reassured

Encourage your child to express his emotions in his own words, and validate the emotions he shares with you. Be reassuring and understanding, with the aim of accompanying the child through the adaptation period.

... to understand what's going on

The child needs to be given clear, accurate and concise information. It's best to use real terms (e.g. death, illness), and to share information that will enable him to understand the situation, without drowning him in too much, complex or detailed information.

... to find a solution

First, support the child in his or her own search for a solution. In this way, the child will not only feel the support of those close to him or her, but will also have the opportunity to develop his or her own coping skills. If necessary, suggest solutions.

FRIDA: I promise! But... It's true that I can't do all the things I used to do. Running, jumping rope, climbing trees. My leg is so small!

GUILLERMO: Come on... Give yourself time, be patient! One step at a time! We can do exercises together if you want to get back in shape faster! (proud) You know, when I was young in Germany, I was a great sportsman!

3. Life goes on!

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Your child's worries should not prevent him from participating in social activities or doing other things that are part of his daily life. Avoidance will only exacerbate his anxiety symptoms. Reassure him, offer him support and encourage him to overcome his worries. In addition, try as much as possible to maintain the same routine, rules and prohibitions. This stability will be reassuring and make it easier for him to adapt.

GUILLERMO: Matilde, I know you want to protect her. But the doctor said she's no longer contagious, so she'll regain her strength faster if she goes outside for a bit!

MATILDE: Okay, okay, padrazo! Papa hen! We'll take her out in the garden tomorrow for some fresh air.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS / EDUCATORS

- It's important to offer reassurance and support, but also to avoid granting favors or permissions because the student is worried about a particular situation. Students must understand that they are subject to the same rules as everyone else.

Developing patience

The difficult times Frida is going through call for a great deal of patience. Her illness prevents her from going to school and seeing her classmates. In addition to feeling the symptoms of her illness, she finds time long and is discouraged by the idea of remaining in this state for some time to come. Frida is very frustrated.

To help a child develop patience. It's a good idea to pay attention to the times when your child shows signs of impatience, but also to the times when he or she is patient. These moments offer information about what motivates and demotivates the child, which can then be used. What's more, a child will develop patience if surrounded by positive examples.

1. Pay attention to moments when the child shows...

... *patience*

Pay attention to:

- the child's behavior
- where and when the child is most patient
- the child's reasoning and motivations
- the context: events or situations recently experienced by the child

... *impatience*

Pay attention to:

- the child's behavior
- places and times when the child most often shows signs of impatience
- the reasons given by the child and the needs they reflect
- context: events or situations recently experienced by the child

If necessary, ask the child about the above points, and help him or her to become aware of them.

So that, in moments of discouragement, to...

- normalize his frustrations: the child needs to feel that you're listening and open to his emotions, so that he understands that they're normal.

FRIDA: Mama, what I want isn't to take my mind off things... it's to get better! (...)

MATILDE: I know... but sometimes you don't have a choice, you have to let time do its work.

- find a way to channel her negative emotions and respond to the need raised by observing her moments of impatience.

- remind him of the sources of motivation he raised when demonstrating patience.
- remind him of his ability to be patient.

When the child demonstrates patience and perseverance, praise his positive attitude.

2. Set an example :

As a parent or educator, show patience with the child who is adapting, and with the people around him.

Practicing empathy

Empathy is the ability to recognize another person's feelings, to be sensitive to them and to put oneself in their shoes to understand what they are feeling, without feeling those emotions oneself¹¹.

As Frida demonstrates, this skill fosters the development of healthy, positive relationships with others. By knowing that Rafael is going through difficult times, she is able to get past his hurtful comments while asserting herself, which ultimately improves the quality of their relationship.

TONITO: *I don't know what he had today, Rafael. Doesn't he scare you?*

FRIDA: *You know, he's not mean. It's just hard for him, since his father died.*

FRIDA: *Your mama couldn't come to watch the race?*

RAFAEL: *No, she's... She's been very busy, especially since... Bravo, you did a great race, chicken leg!*
She looks Rafael straight in the eye.

FRIDA: *Frida! My name is Frida!*

RAFAEL: *Yes, sorry... Nice running, Frida!*

FRIDA: *Friends?*

RAFAEL: *Friends.*



¹¹ The Naitre et grandir team (2022). *Children and empathy* in French. Retrieved from <https://naitreetgrandir.com/fr/etape/3-5-ans/comportement/ik-naitre-grandir-enfant-developpement-moral-sympathie-empathie/>

Empathy is learned by interacting with others, more specifically by being around people who are themselves sensitive or who respond to their needs in a warm way. Between the ages of 5 and 8, children usually begin to have better control over strong emotions, and can understand that their emotions and needs may be different from those of others. It is therefore essential that children first understand their own emotions and be able to regulate them, so that they can then turn towards others and show empathy.

1. Set the example!

A great deal of behavior is simply learned by the child, who reproduces the behavior of those around him or her. So it's important to show empathy to the people around you. You can, for example...

- ... tell your child what makes you empathize with him or her.
- ... use positive, non-discriminatory language towards others, on a daily basis.
- ... offer comfort or help to someone who seems to need it.

2. A matter of regulating emotions...

How can we expect children to understand and empathize with the emotions of others when they have difficulty understanding and regulating their own emotions?

- Encourage children to pay attention to the physical sensations and thoughts that accompany an emotion. This will enable them to detect it more quickly and act on it before it overwhelms them.
- Encourage them to "use their words" to communicate what they're feeling, and to do so respectfully.
- Teach positive affirmation, i.e. positive ways of asserting needs and communicating dissatisfaction.

3. Turn to others:

TIPS FOR PARENTS	TIPS FOR TEACHERS / EDUCATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Use a situation experienced by a fictional character from a book, film or TV show to allow the child to practice putting themselves in the other person's shoes, then, for example, ask: <i>how would you feel if you were in Frida's shoes? How would you react?</i> → Emphasize the positive impact of the child's empathetic gestures. The child will feel valued and will be more inclined to repeat such gestures. For example: <i>Did you see how happy she is? I'm sure she appreciates it!</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → When there is a conflict between students, listen to each other's point of view and communicate it to the other. → Don't tolerate bullying behavior at school. Instead, teach students to accept differences and adopt positive behaviors as an alternative. → Encourage students to help each other, to be of service and to comfort others. Praise students when they show empathy.

Imagination: a tool not to be overlooked!

Imagination plays an important role in Frida's life. When she feels the symptoms of her illness, she uses her imagination to escape to a world where she no longer feels the pain. When she's sad or worried, she brings comfort and a sense of security. Her imaginary friend protects her, gives her hope in her recovery, and gives her the motivation and confidence to persevere.

What is imagination?

Imagination refers to the intellectual capacity to create images, share them and shape reality according to them¹².

Frida developed her imagination through play and the creation of artistic works. These are two common ways of stimulating children's imagination, with many benefits. The diagram overleaf offers a few tips for stimulating the imagination through play and/or the practice of an art form, and explains the related benefits.



¹² Levine, E. G. Chapter 14: *On the Play Ground*. *Child Psychotherapy and Expressive Arts Therapy*. 257-273. In: Levine, E. G., Levine, S. K. (1999). *Foundations of Expressive Arts Therapy: Theoretical and Clinical Perspectives*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

DEVELOPING IMAGINATION THROUGH PLAY

- To use his creativity, a child sometimes has to play alone, without any other stimulation. Occasionally, they may also be bored. The child will then be looking for fun and, being alone, will have no choice but to use his imagination.
- Let the child play with everyday objects that aren't basically designed for play (e.g., a rock, a cardboard box, a blanket or packaging).
- Use role-playing or visualization games, stories, figurines or stuffed animals as a playful way to help a child prepare for or adapt to a new situation.

CRISTINA: O Doctor, Doctor, what's happening to me?

FRIDA: Frida, I've run a lot of tests and I can tell you that you've caught TATATAM!... polio!

- Games that stimulate the imagination can also help develop social skills such as listening and empathy.

TONITO: We all have a little animal in us... Mine's a pig laugh...

FRIDA: And me... a little chicken leg...

- Art and play can be used by children as a means of communication. In this case, they are interesting tools for helping the child. However, we must not guide play or artistic creation in order to meet a pre-established objective. Instead, we should simply throw a line in the water and let the child express himself freely.
- In both play and artistic creation, children should be able to explore and make discoveries, without any limits being imposed. Welcome their ideas, no matter how crazy!

TONITO (To Frida): Do you think I could color Chiquita... blue?

FRIDA: You can even add yellow polka dots if you like!!!! And a red nose!

DEVELOPING IMAGINATION THROUGH THE ARTS

- Imagination comes into play when a child has the opportunity to create an artistic work. The child must therefore practice improvising and creating freely. For example, it's better to use a blank worksheet of paper rather than a coloring book to develop the child's imagination.
- Use artistic creation to communicate to children that they have the right to try things out, make mistakes and try again. The child learns that mistakes are part of life.
- Practicing an art form can be a good way of managing negative emotions for both children and adults. Give your child the opportunity to use art as a means to this end, if he or she so desires. You can also set an example by using this method yourself.

FRIDA: I've danced with death, but I've turned every scar, every suffering into a canvas on which I've painted my story, my reality. I didn't follow any school or anyone's influence. I needed to express myself and, through painting, I could say it all and fight for my freedom! Freedom to be a girl, to love, to travel, to create. I found beauty in everything.

The creative process is cathartic. Speaking of writers, Boris Cyrulnik says: "By writing, by crossing out, by scribbling arrows in all directions, the writer mends his torn self. The written word transforms suffering."

Frida Kahlo said: "My painting carries the message of pain [...]. Painting has completed my life. Paintings have taken the place of all that."

Credits

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Film images: © Haut et court, Tobo, Du Coup

