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# LESSONS & ACTIVITIES

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# A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

***Calling the Wind*** is a work of fiction inspired by kaze no denwa, the wind phone created by Itaru Sasaki of Ōtsuchi, Japan. In 2010 Sasaki set up in his backyard garden a glass-paned phone booth that housed a disconnected rotary telephone to privately voice his grief over the death of his beloved cousin. Shortly after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami claimed thousands of lives, word spread about Sasaki's phone booth, and many Japanese people made pilgrimages to find solace there.

Over the years, countless individuals from numerous countries have visited Sasaki's phone booth on that windy coastal hill. Other phone installations have since shown up elsewhere in the world, including the United States.

We first heard about Sasaki's wind phone in 2017 on NPR's *This American Life* at a pivotal time when we each were in the throes of our own personal losses. That audio podcast sparked the beginning of our close collaboration on *Calling the Wind*.

While working on this project and consulting with experts, we've learned that grief isn't a fixed or prescriptive go-from-one-stage-to-the-next kind of process. There are many emotions associated with it, and not everyone experiences grief in the same way. Each person's experience with loss is as unique as the individual who experiences it.

Grief, like the ever-present wind captured in the illustrations, is fluid in motion and has no set time limit. It fluctuates and varies in intensity and length for each individual. It is also important to note that children grieve differently than adults. (Please refer to Recommended Resources included in this guide for more information.)

As David Kessler shares in his book, *Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief* (Scribner, 2019), there is still life and love after loss: "The world keeps spinning. The seasons change, the dead of winter gives way to the rebirth that occurs every spring. Every storm gives way to a clear new day. Despite our losses, we continue."

*Calling the Wind* was created to help any young reader experiencing a loss (i.e., death, divorce, a way of life, etc.). We hope that children, along with the adults who work with them, will find our story a useful resource and soothing reminder of the healing power of human connection and hope.





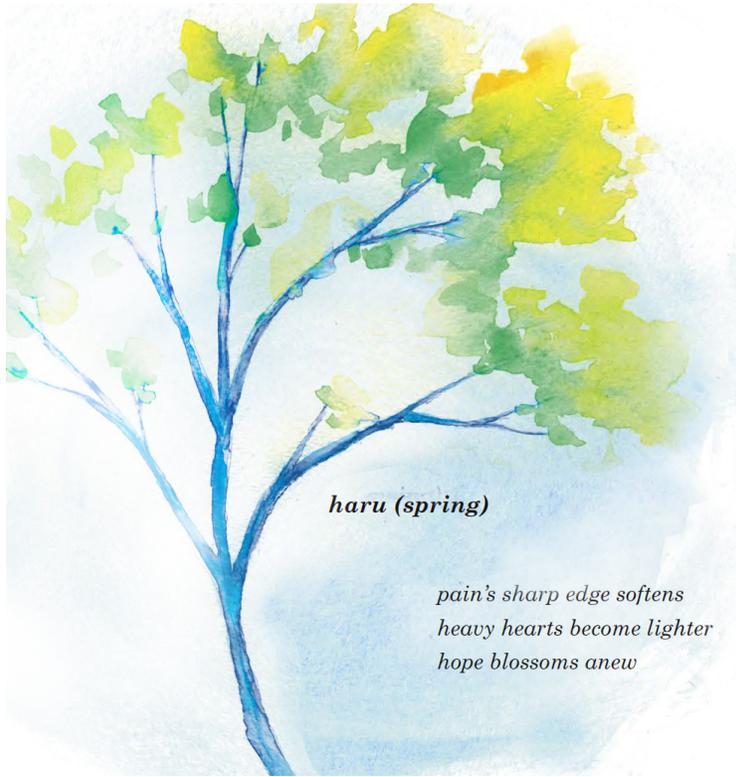


## Before Reading

- Let your young audience know you will be reading *Calling the Wind* more than once.
- Show the book cover and read the title aloud. Ask them what they think the story is about based on the book cover. List their responses on a chart.
- Read the story aloud, allowing time for the children to closely look at each illustration.

## Questions After Reading

- In the wordless scenes of the opening pages, why do you think the family is not talking with each other?
- Have you ever been so upset or full of emotions that it was hard to put into words all that you were feeling?
- When you were finally able to let those big feelings out and voice them, did it help you feel better? Explain.
- Keep looking closely as the illustrations continue to “tell” the story:
  - o What did the brother find on the hillside bench during his walk?
  - o Where is the yellow bird leading the brother?
  - o Who do you think the brother is talking to in the phone booth?
- When the boy is talking to the wind, what do you think the wind represents in this story?
- In the scene where the brother is whispering to his big sister, what is he telling her?
- Why do you think the grandfather, at first, didn’t want to go to the phone booth? What or who made him change his mind?
- Why do you think the grandfather left an origami paper crane by the telephone?
- When the grandfather and children returned home with more wildflowers in hand, can you explain what the father was feeling and why?
- How can you tell that the father felt bad after accidentally breaking the flower vase and upsetting the family?
- After the father talked on the phone, why do you think he picked up the origami crane and took it with him?
- Why do you think the father gave the paper crane to his son for him to release in the wind?
- Take another look at the scenes where the family members all head out together to the phone booth to take turns talking on the phone. Share your opinion as to why they decided to make this a family activity.
- Each character in the story has a different way of showing and sharing their feelings of loss. As you go back through the illustrations, how would you describe...
  - o ...the brother’s feelings?
  - o ...the big sister’s feelings?
  - o ...the grandfather’s feelings?
  - o ... the little sister’s feelings?
  - o ...the father’s feelings?
- There are times when we associate colors with certain feelings. For example, if someone says they’re feeling blue, what are they feeling? (Have students shout out the answer.) Go through the pages of the book and pay attention to where the yellow color shows up (i.e., the pillow seat, memories, the bird, the origami crane). What kinds of feelings/emotions do you associate with these yellow illustrations?
- What are you more likely to experience: seeing the wind or feeling the wind?
- What about seeing love or feeling love? Is it possible to still feel love for those we can no longer physically see? Explain.



## Haiku Lesson:

- Introduce or review what a haiku is. Explain its Japanese origins, typical themes of nature and share that these poems can be about other things, too.
- Explain the haiku's three-lined, 5-7-5 syllable rule.
- Have the students practice breaking down the syllables in each line of the story's winter haiku by using their fingers or clapping their hands to count the syllables in each line as you read it aloud. Do the same with the spring haiku.
- Ask students why the author chose to start the story with a winter haiku and end with a spring haiku.
- Have students create their own haikus. It could be about nature and/or their feelings. Encourage them to draw pictures to go with their haikus.

## Paper Crane Lesson:

- Introduce the origins of origami, the art of paper folding. Explain that in 17th and 18th century Japan, paper folding was done for both enjoyment and ceremonial purposes. The first known origami book, published in 1797, instructed how to do paper folding of 1,000 cranes! Why? Legend has it that those who fold one thousand paper cranes will have their heartfelt wish come true.
- Explain the difference between legend (folk tale/fiction) and fact.
- Show a photo of a crane. Explain that the crane is a Japanese symbol of long life and good fortune.
- Share with students that after WW II, the folded paper crane became a global symbol of peace, hope, and support for those facing difficult challenges. Supplement this lesson with the reading of *The Complete Story of Sadako Sasaki* (Tuttle Publishing, 2020) and/or *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* (Puffin Books, 2004), which tell the true story behind the global recognition of origami paper cranes as symbols for peace and hope.
- Printer-friendly instructions and YouTube videos are readily available on the internet for making origami cranes like the grandfather made in *Calling the Wind*. **Try this activity yourself, first, to determine if this is a doable activity for your particular young readers.**



# Suggested Activities

**Note:** The "Picking up the Pieces" and "Memory Box" activities shared here and variations thereof are just a few of the numerous activities offered by grief support groups/organizations. Please refer to "Recommended Resources" to access additional kid-friendly, age-appropriate activities.

## "Picking Up the Pieces"

When children experience loss (death, divorce, a way of life, etc.), it's normal for them to feel as if their lives have gone to pieces, as with the flower vase that was accidentally broken by the father in *Calling the Wind*. This activity, based on Kintsugi, the centuries-old Japanese art of fixing broken pottery, can help grieving children and their families understand that, while their lives will forever be changed, healing can still take place. **This activity will require adult assistance in the breaking and gluing (especially if using a hot glue gun or super glue) to reassemble the clay flowerpot.**

### Supplies:

- clay flowerpot (NO GLASS!)
- hammer
- gallon-size freezer bag
- glue (hot glue, craft glue, super glue)
- paint, sharpies, markers, crayons
- magazine cutouts, pictures, decorative papers



### Instructions:

- Put the clay pot in the freezer bag and use the hammer to carefully break the pot into several large pieces.
- On the inside pieces of the pot, have the child write or draw their feelings since the loss of the loved one.
- On the outside of those pieces, have the child write, draw, paint or collage /decoupage images of positive, happy memories and feelings they've shared with their loved one.
- Use the glue to adhere pieces of the pot back together to make it "whole" again.
- Optional: plant a flower in the pot as a reminder of growth from life experiences and hope for the future.



### TALKING POINTS:

Picking up the pieces after a loss is hard. We may feel broken but, with time and caring support from others to grieve fully, we will be able to put our broken pieces back together. While we still may have cracks and holes because grief forever changes us, we have the resilience in us to create something meaningful and beautiful with what we have in our hearts.



## Memory Box

According to experts specializing in the counseling of bereaved children, one of the biggest fears grieving children have is that they will forget their loved ones. This memory box activity helps children in their grieving process by allowing them to physically store special items that remind them of their connections to their loved ones and keep those loving memories alive.

### Supplies:

- a wooden box for more durability; a shoe box will also work
- stickers, craft glue, Mod Podge
- paint, sharpies, markers, crayons
- magazine cutouts, pictures, decorative papers
- items that spark positive, loving memories of their loved one (photos, notes, letters, drawings, books, holiday/birthday cards, small personal objects/mementos/items, etc.)

### Instructions:

- Supply the child with a box. Consider the option of a lock box if the child wishes their items to be stored under lock and key for personal safekeeping.
- Offer the child arts & crafts supplies to decorate the outside of the box.
- Have the child gather and store inside their box those items that remind them of their loved one. Let them know that they can collect more items over time.
- Encourage the child to place the box somewhere readily accessible, so that it can be pulled out whenever the child needs a comforting reminder of their loved one.

### TALKING POINTS:

When a person dies, your love doesn't die with them. Every item you choose to put in that box helps to keep your memories of your loved one alive. It is also a reminder of how important they are to you as a part of your family history and family life moving forward. You can open it and put it away whenever you need to. It's always there--just for you!

#### Reading for Adults:

- Dougy Center. *35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child*. Portland, OR: The Dougy Center, 2010.
- Kessler, David. *Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief*. New York: Scribner, 2019.
- Leder, Steve. *More Beautiful Than Before: How Suffering Transforms Us*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, Inc., 2017.
- Pogue, David. "What to Say (and What Not to Say) To Someone Who's Grieving." *New York Times*. February 14, 2019. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/14/smarter-living/what-to-say-and-what-not-to-say-to-someone-whos-grieving.html>

#### Reading for Kids:

- Cordell, Matthew. *Bear Island*. New York: Feiwel & Friends, 2021.
- Holmes, Margaret. *A Terrible Thing Happened*. Washington, DC: Magination Press, 2000.
- Jeffers, Oliver. *The Heart and the Bottle*. New York: Philomel Books, 2010.
- Karst, Patrice. *The Invisible String*. New York: Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2018.
- Levis, Caron. *Ida, Always*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2016.
- Papageorge, Tiffany. *My Yellow Balloon*. San Francisco: Minoan Moon Publishing, 2014.
- Rowland, Joanna. *The Memory Box: A Book About Grief*. Minneapolis: Beaming Books, 2017.
- Schwiebert, Pat and Chuck DeKlyen. *Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss*. Portland, OR: Grief Watch, 2007.
- Wood, Brennan. *A Kids Book About Grief*. Portland, OR: A Kids Book About, Inc., 2022.

#### Recommended Resources

- Coalition to Support Grieving Students ([grievingstudents.org](http://grievingstudents.org))
- Dougy Center, The National Center for Grieving Children and Families ([dougy.org](http://dougy.org))
- Dougy Center Resources for School Personnel ([dougy.org/grief-support-resources/supporters-of-grievers/school-personnel](http://dougy.org/grief-support-resources/supporters-of-grievers/school-personnel))
- National Alliance for Grieving Children ([childrengrieve.org](http://childrengrieve.org))