

I Was Taught/Shown...

How we express (or don't express) ourselves is often shaped by what we were taught or what was modeled to us as we were growing up. Take a moment to think back on what you were shown or taught about these scenarios in your family of origin, culture, and community.

Where do you fall on the spectrum of these either/or statements?

I was taught to show my emotions outwardly/I was taught to not express my emotions.

I was encouraged to talk about people who died/I was taught not to speak of them again.

I was taught that outwardly expressing grief is a sign of weakness/a sign of strength

I was taught to share personal information outside of the family/I was taught to keep family information private.

I was taught to tell stories in a circular, non-linear manner/I was taught to tell stories in a linear manner

I was taught that spirituality/religion are important parts of grief and life/I was taught that spirituality has no place in grief or other aspects of life.

I was taught/shown that sadness and crying are grief indicators/I was taught there are many emotions and behaviors associated with grief.

What you were taught and shown likely influences what you look for or expect to see in others when they are grieving. They might also affect how you assess how other people are expressing their grief as good/bad, appropriate/inappropriate, right/wrong. Building this self-awareness is a good first step in creating an environment of support that includes the variety of ways that children, teens, and adults express their grief.



The Dougy Center

The National Center for Grieving Children & Families