

Be Right Back Jars

We know that familial grief can often feel like a dance. Usually families are in tune with each other, and if one is having a good day, the other may suppress feelings of sadness or hesitate to share a memory. We also know how important it is to have a safe space to share whatever your heart is feeling. This activity honors both the desire to protect and the importance of expression.

Find a jar or vessel that can be accessible to everyone in the family. As an example, mason jars work great! Either decorate your jar collectively, or give the kids some creative freedom to do so independently.

Once your jar is ready, cut some strips of paper to keep nearby. Set the jar, the strips and a pen somewhere in the home that is within reach.

Explain to the family the Be Right Back Jar is a place to put thoughts, feelings, questions or memories you would like to tuck away for another time. Then set a specific time of the week (every week) that the family will gather around to read what is in the jar. This could be Sunday at 5pm for example. Once something is read, it's important to leave time for discussion. You can ask others in the family if they have felt similarly, or if they would like to add anything. Try to listen without judgment/advice and remember, there is no need to try to fix feelings. Sometimes it is helpful to set a time limit (say 30 minutes), so it doesn't become overwhelming. If there are still things in the jar, save them for next time; since you have a set time each week, you can be assured you will Be Right Back for them!

After you've had your Be Right Back time, transition to a family activity! Maybe watch a movie together, go for a walk or play a game to continue to foster a safe space for all the big feelings while strengthening bonds and having fun together.