

# TAPS®

TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

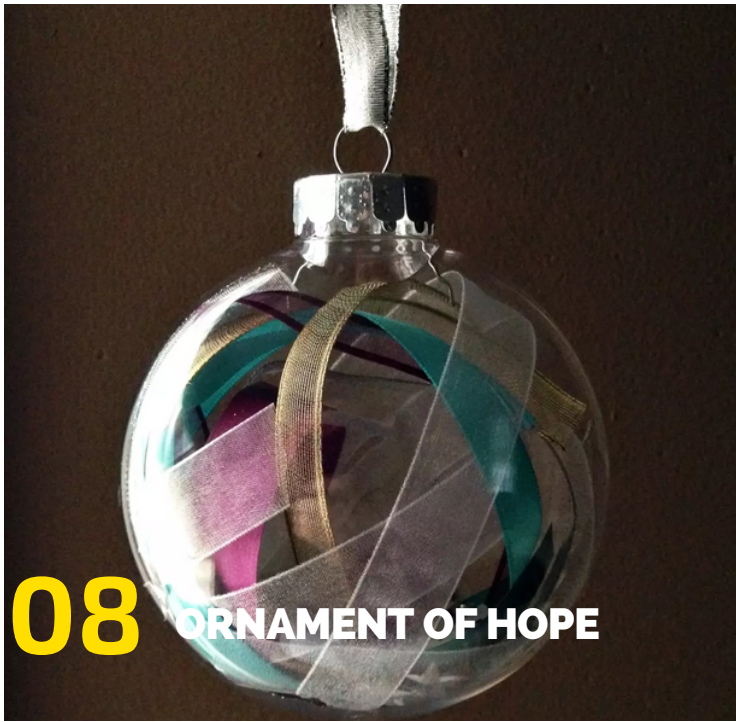
A C T I V I T Y   B O O K



DECEMBER 2020  
SEASONS OF HOPE

# L O V E L I V E S O N

# CONTENTS



## 08 ORNAMENT OF HOPE



## 14 SNOWFLAKES

LIKE SNOWFLAKES, EACH PERSON'S GRIEF JOURNEY IS UNIQUE AND YET WE ARE NOT ALONE IN OUR GRIEF.



## 19 HOLIDAY RECIPES

OUR HOLIDAY RECIPES FOR DECEMBER INCLUDE A FEW CHRISTMAS CLASSICS THAT BRING THE TASTE OF THE HOLIDAYS TO YOUR FAMILY.

### FAMILY ACTIVITIES

#### 06 TREE CHAIN

*The Tree Chain is a fun and unique way to build a Christmas tree out of construction paper. You can add or modify it to include words of hope to each chain.*

#### 11 TRAIN OF HOPE

*Be matched with a service member (TAPS Military Mentor) who is currently deployed.*

### PARENT'S CORNER

#### 03 UNDERSTANDING AND IMPACT OF GRIEF BY DEVELOPMENTAL AGE

### COPING CORNER

#### 09 COLORING HOPE

*Coloring has shown to be a great coping skill that can be used for all ages. Color the "HOPE" coloring page.*

### YOUTH ACTIVITIES

#### 12 I HOPE...

*"I HOPE..." is a journal topic that can be used as a discussion starter about what your family is hopeful for in the coming weeks and new year. They can talk about it, write about it, and draw it.*

#### 13 TRAIN OF HOPE

*Train of hope is a fun way to do something fun and hopeful everyday of the month. Find fun and unique ways to spread some holiday joy and hope.*



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[HTTPS://WWW.TAPS.ORG/YOUTH/2020/FALL](https://www.taps.org/youth/2020/fall)





# UPCOMING EVENTS



## CHILDREN'S CARE GROUPS

*For bereaved kids and pre-teens ages 4 to 12, this is an opportunity to come together with peers over Zoom and share experiences, increase resources, and build a community of support.*

**06 DECEMBER**

**03 JANUARY**

## TEEN COFFEE HOUSE

*For teens ages 13 to 18, the coffee house is a safe place to express feelings, and share experiences within a virtual environment. Eligible to those teens who have experienced the death of a parent or sibling who served in the military.*

**08 DECEMBER**

**13 JANUARY**

## FAMILY ACTIVITY NIGHT

*This is a unique and exciting experience for the whole family to bond, learn more coping skills, support each other, communicate together, and have fun.*

**13 DECEMBER**

**10 JANUARY**

## PARENTING CARE GROUP (ADULTS ONLY)

*Provides a safe space for parents and guardians to share their challenges around parenting bereaved children while increasing their resources and support.*

**27 DECEMBER**

**19 JANUARY**



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[HTTPS://WWW.TAPS.ORG/YOUTH/2020/FALL](https://www.taps.org/youth/2020/fall)





# PARENT'S CORNER

## PARENT'S CORNER

Parenting children and teenagers is a challenge in many ways, especially when you and your children and teenagers are grieving the death of someone in your life. Parents, guardians, and grandparents will often ask us how they can best help and support their kids in their grief. Research indicates that children who have a supportive, trusting relationship with their primary caregiver and a role model for healthy coping in their grief fare better than those who do not. This can certainly be difficult as everyone in the family is grieving in their own way. While we will not always have the perfect words to say and will struggle ourselves with grief, finding a way to have meaningful time together with your kids will have a lasting impact on them as they adapt to their loss and grow into adulthood.

The TAPS Family Activity Booklet has been developed to provide ideas for positive family togetherness and engagement. Some activities are simply fun ways to spend time together, while other activities provide an opportunity for meaningful sharing and mutual support among you and your children / teenagers. This section offers some ideas for how to use the activities in this booklet to engage with your children and teenagers on conversations about grief, memories of your person who died, and ways to cope. Grief is not a problem you can solve for your kids. Grief is an experience you are all living. In fact, our goal is not to take their grief away. Grief is their natural reaction to the death of someone in their life and how they are adapting to all the thoughts, feelings, and changes that this brings. Be patient with yourself and with your kids as you are all grieving and finding ways to adapt to all the changes brought about by your loss. Take things one step at a time.

## UNDERSTANDING AND IMPACT OF GRIEF BY DEVELOPMENTAL AGE

### BIRTH TO 2 YEARS

Children this age live in the present and have no concept of death. They do not have the language skills to express themselves, but they are affected by others around them and will react to the absence of people in their lives. They might seem unsettled or irritable, crying more than usual as they search for or long for the person who died. They also may have difficulty sleeping and want to be held, or reassured.





# PARENT'S CORNER

## 3 TO 5 YEARS

Children this age have a limited understanding of death. They understand that a person is missing, but struggle with understanding that death is permanent. They sometimes think of death in terms of cartoon characters who can spring back to life at any time. Because of their lack of understanding of the permanence of death, children this age might search for the person who died or ask when the person is coming home. They may have intense periods of crying followed by periods of acting like nothing happened. They may also revert to earlier behaviors such as using baby talk, bedwetting, or wanting to sleep with their parent.

## 6 TO 8 YEARS

Children of this age are beginning to understand the concept of death. For many death is still seen as reversible. They often feel responsible for the person's death, believing that the person died because of something they said or did. For example, they might believe their person died because they were disobedient or were mad at them. They might be overly concerned with the body and what happened to the body. Some children this age will ask a lot of questions. Others will hardly communicate at all and might go on as if nothing has happened. Many will also worry about who else might die or that they might die. They might be clingy to the adults in their lives, needing extra attention and reassurance.

## 9 TO 11 YEARS

Children this age have a more developed concept of death and the finality of death. They understand that death is universal and can happen to anyone. But they still have many child-like beliefs around death. Like younger children, they are concerned with the body and what happened to the body. They will ask a lot of questions seeking details about the death. They are beginning to become more concerned about the feelings of others and worry who else might die or that they might die. Reactions may vary based on their developing personalities. Some children this age may be more reserved, even stoic about their loss, while others may be more expressive and emotional.

## 12 TO 14 YEARS

Pre-teens have a full understanding that death is universal and final. They can reflect on more abstract concepts of death and often wonder what happens to people when they die. Pre-adolescents will often avoid talking about the person who died or not want others to know that someone in their life died. They do not want to be perceived as 'different' by their peers. Outwardly, they may act as though nothing happened or even seem indifferent. They might use jokes or humor to hide feelings of sadness.



# PARENT'S CORNER

## 15 TO 18 YEARS

Teenagers have a more 'adult' concept of death. Like pre-teens, teenagers have a more abstract understanding of death. Many teenagers see themselves as invincible and death is a direct contradiction to this belief. Reactions among teenagers may vary. Some are more likely to show shock, sadness, or anger, whereas others may grieve more privately. Some might pull away from family and turn to peers for support. Others might want to take on more adult responsibilities around the home, pulling away from peers.

## IDEAS TO ENGAGE WITH AND NURTURE YOUR CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

No one knows your children better than you. The knowledge you have of your kids and your instincts to know how to care for them are already within you. Your relationship with your children and teens is unique and has developed throughout their lifetime with you. The tips below shared below are generalizations that have been helpful to many parents supporting their children and teenagers through grief. Some may apply to you and your family, while others may not. When reading through the tips and information below, consider you and your children's needs as you determine how to best support and nurture them through their grief.

- Acknowledge and validate your children's thoughts and feelings about their loss.
- Create opportunities to spend time with them doing things they enjoy.
- Share stories and special memories with them about the person who died.
- Be open to and answer their questions to the best of your ability.
- Maintain existing routines and create new ones.

Children fare better when they have a positive relationship with the adults in their lives and they feel that adults understand them. Healthy growth is bolstered when children can go to their parent with their thoughts, feelings, or questions. Open, accepting, nonjudgmental interactions will strengthen your relationship with your children. You can connect with your kids by making time for them throughout each week where your kids can have your undivided attention. Though this might be challenging because of your schedule and the intensity of your grief, it is valuable time for your kids and will have a positive impact on your relationship with them in the long run. Avoid asking too many questions, rather join your children when they are playing, share stories with them, or read books together. Setting aside time will deepen the bond you share with them and will help them in their grief.

Join us each month for our Parenting Care Group, where we will exchange stories and share ideas about how to help our children and teenagers to cope with their grief.





# TREE CHAIN

## FAMILY ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)

## MATERIALS

- **25 STRIPS OF PAPER – 19 GREEN STRIPS, 5 RED STRIPS, 1 YELLOW STRIP**
- **TAPE, GLUE OR STAPLER**

## DIRECTIONS

1. *Tape paper strips around one another in the form of a tree. TIP: You may have to look at this photo to see how the tree is constructed, because it took some time to get it right!*
2. *Row 1: Start with the yellow to a green.*
3. *Row 2: Hang 2 more green off your first green.*
4. *Row 3: The next row has 3 paper chains, one off each of the 2nd row and 1 in the middle of those.*
5. *Row 4: Hang 2 off each of the 2 edge chains from row 3.*
6. *Row 5: The next row has 5 paper chains, one off each of the 4th row and 2 each in the middle of those.*
7. *Row 6: Hang 2 off each of the 3 chains from row 5.*
8. *Row 7: The next row has 3 chains for the "trunk". Hang 2 sideways off of the middle 4 chains from row 6 and one in the middle of those.*



Source: <https://www.makeandtakes.com/weekend-make-and-takes-advents>



# WISH UPON A STAR

YOUTH ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)

MATERIALS

- PEN / PENCIL
- MARKERS, COLOR PENCILS, CRAYONS

DIRECTIONS

1. Have each person think of five things they hope happen in the coming month or even in the new year.
2. List those five things below.

*5 Things I*

# HOPE

HAPPEN THIS MONTH



1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_





# ORNAMENT OF HOPE

## FAMILY ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)

## MATERIALS

- RIBBON (VARIOUS COLORS)
- BEADS
- SCISSORS
- PLASTIC CLEAR ORNAMENT

## DIRECTIONS

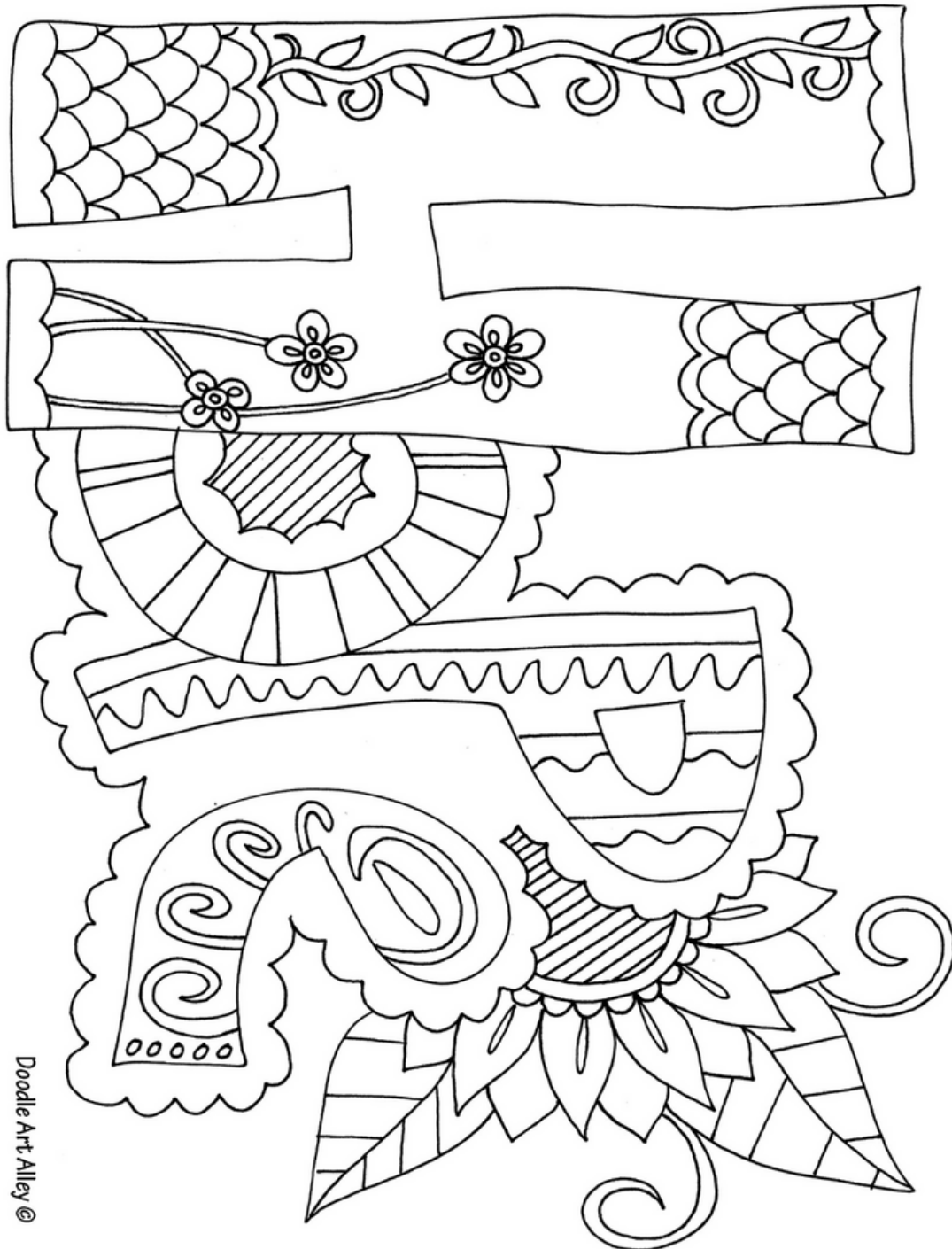
1. Cut all the ribbon up into six-inch segments.
2. Talk with kids about all the different emotions they feel when they are thinking about the person they have lost and make a list. Some common emotions with young kids may be sad, lonely, happy, scared, mad, love, etc. For older kids, there may be more emotions, like yearning, guilt, regret, hope, yearning, anger, etc.
3. Assign each emotion to a different color ribbon and lay them all out on a table, with labels.
4. Give each person an ornament.
5. Explain that each ribbon is a different emotion and they should fill the ornament with the different emotions they feel when they think about the person they have lost. This is a great time to talk with younger kids about feelings and help them understand that they may be feeling a wide range of different feelings, and that is okay.
6. Explain next that the beads represent memories. Encourage kids to think about different holiday memories they have of the person they have lost. For each memory have them drop a bead into the ornament.





# COLORING HOPE

FAMILY ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)



Doodle Art Alley ©





# LIGHTS OF HOPE

## FAMILY ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)

## MATERIALS

- **CANDLE(S) - ANY TYPE OF CANDLE WILL WORK, INCLUDING TEA LIGHT CANDLE**
- **SAFE SPACE TO PLACE CANDLE**

## DIRECTIONS

1. *On Thursday, December 24th light a candle in honor and remembrance of all those family and friends who are not with you today.*
2. *As you light the candle say their name.*
3. *Share a memory or story about them.*





# TRAIN OF HOPE

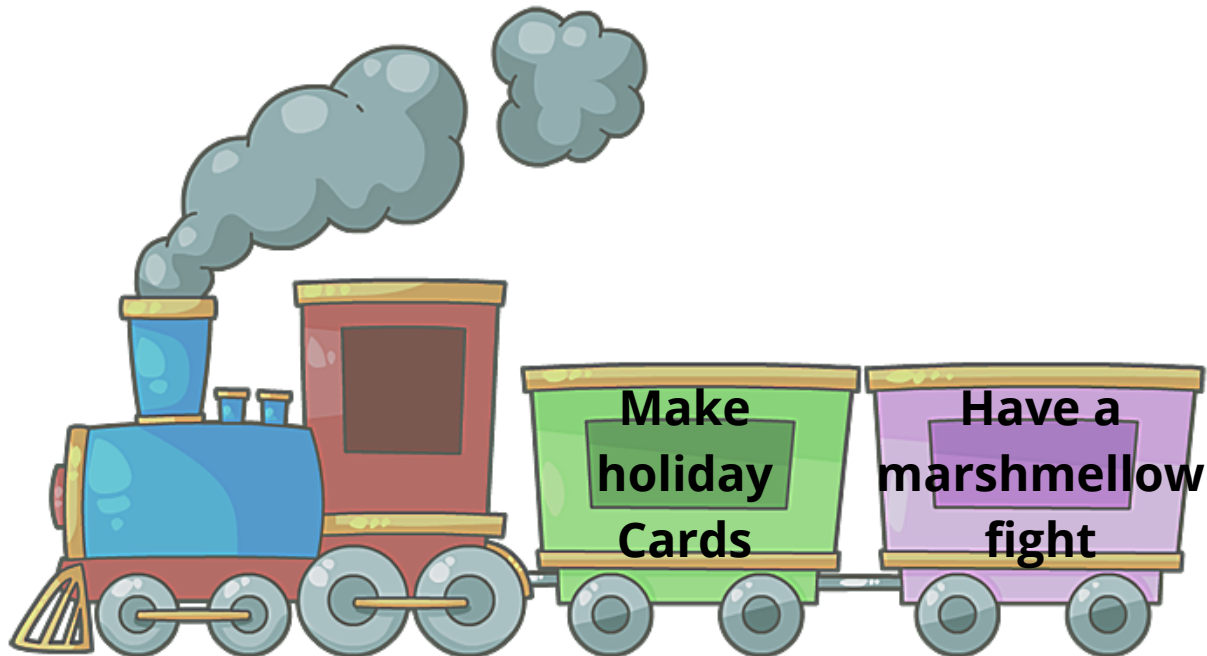
## FAMILY ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)

## MATERIALS

- **COLORS, MARKERS, SHARPIES, ETC**
- **TRAIN CAR(S) PRINTOUTS**

## DIRECTIONS

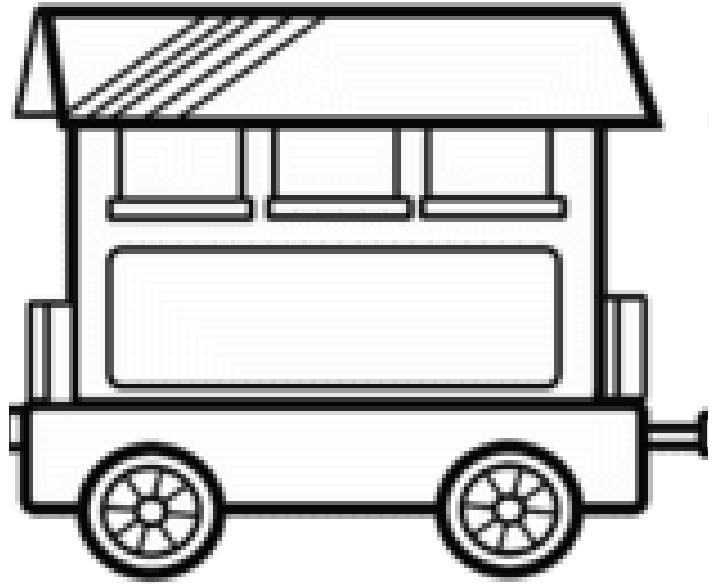
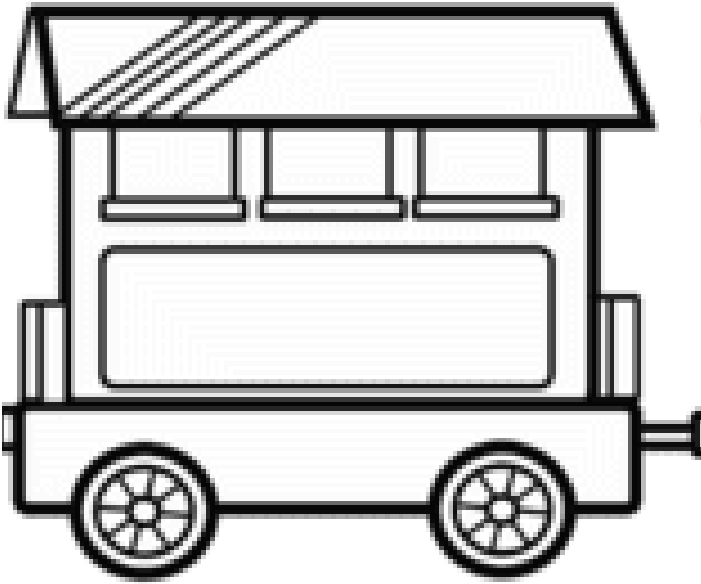
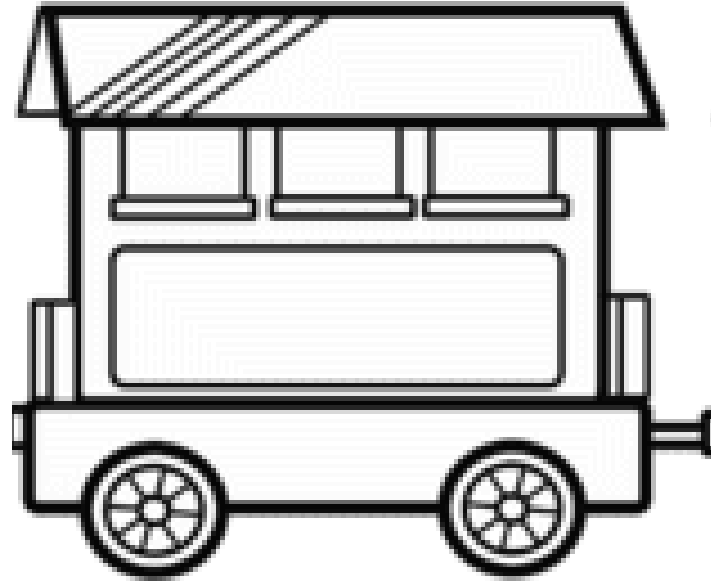
1. *Create a Train of Hope.*
2. *Print 31 train cars, one for each day of the month (printable train cars on the next page).*
3. *You can decorate the train cars as you would like.*
4. *For each day, add something that your family hopes or wants to do. For example these can be activities like, "having a marshmallow fight", "making holiday cards to send to family and friends", etc.*
5. *Add a new train car each day.*







# TRAIN OF HOPE





# DO YOU WANT TO BUILD A SNOWMAN?

## FAMILY ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)

## MATERIALS

- **LARGE AND/OR JUMBO MARSHMALLOWS**
- **PRETZEL STICKS**
- **CINNAMON RED HOTS**
- **CHOCOLATE CHIPS**
- **MINI PEANUT BUTTER CUPS**
- **ROLOS CANDY**
- **WHITE ICING**
- **BLACK FOOD COLORING**

## DIRECTIONS

1. Use the jumbo marshmallows for the adult snowmen and regular large ones for the little snowmen.
2. Using icing as glue, paste three marshmallows together and let dry.
3. Paint eyes and mouth with black food coloring and a toothpick.
4. Use a dab of icing to attach chocolate chip nose and make hats.
5. Make pretzel stick arms and paste on buttons.





# SNOWFLAKES

## FAMILY ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)

## MATERIALS

- **SQUARE PIECES OF PAPER**
- **STRING OR TAPE**
- **VARIETY OF COLORED MARKERS**
- **SCISSORS**
- **GLITTER GLUE (OPTIONAL)**

## DIRECTIONS

1. Fold the piece of paper in half, forming a triangle.
2. Fold the triangle in half two more times.
3. Using the scissors cut as many shapes as you would like in the folded triangle.
4. These shapes create the unique design of your snowflake.
5. When you are finished, unfold your snowflake.
6. Decorate your snowflake using the colored markers or glitter glue.
7. You can use the string or tape to hang your snowflake somewhere.

*"Like snowflakes, each person's grief journey is unique and yet we are not alone in our grief. We grieve with others. Just like snowflakes, sometimes grief comes in one flake at a time. Other times, it comes like a blizzard. Our grief journey can also feel like an unexpected snow storm, as intense feelings may unexpectedly appear but gradually lighten. Eventually snowflakes melt away, similar to the way the feelings we experience on our grief journey can change. As you create your snowflakes, share with your family about how you have felt connected to others on your grief journey and what has made it unique."*

*Created in Partnership with Camp Erin Seattle*







# GRINCH SLIME

## YOUTH ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)

## MATERIALS

- **1 (6 OUNCE) BOTTLE ELMER'S GLUE IN GREEN**
- **ABOUT ¼ CUP WARM WATER**
- **½ TEASPOON BAKING SODA**
- **1½ TABLESPOON CONTACT LENS SOLUTION (CONTAINING BORIC ACID)**
- **ABOUT 1 ½ TABLESPOON GLITTER (IF DESIRED)**
- **TOYS (IF DESIRED)**

## DIRECTIONS

1. Empty the glue into a large bowl.
  2. Fill the empty glue bottle about ⅓ full with warm water (about ¼ cup) and seal with the lid.
  3. Shake well to combine the remaining glue with the water.
  4. Pour into bowl with glue and stir to combine.
  5. Add the baking soda to the glue and stir to mix thoroughly.
  6. If you are adding additional glitter or confetti, stir the glitter into the glue mixture.
  7. Add contact lens solution to the glue mixture and stir well. (Note: regular glue will require less contact lens solution than glitter glue.)
  8. Add the contact lens solution slowly, mixing between additions, and add only enough to bring the glue together into a soft ball.
  9. Remove the slime from the bowl allowing any excess liquid to remain in the bowl. The slime will be sticky.
  10. Begin to play with the slime, kneading it as you would bread dough, to bring the slime together. The slime is ready when no longer sticky.
- Tip: Best if stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator when not in use.





# HOLIDAY SCAVENGER HUNT

## YOUTH ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)

## MATERIALS

- **HOLIDAY SCAVENGER HUNT (SEE BELOW)**
- **PEN OR PENCIL**

## DIRECTIONS

1. *Discover the answers to the scavenger hunt questions or complete the given task.*
2. *Find the item and take a picture with it.*
3. *Share your pictures at [youthprograms@taps.org](mailto:youthprograms@taps.org)*

## SCAVENGER HUNT

1. *Record yourself singing the verse to one holiday song.*
2. *Bake a holiday treat.*
3. *Read a holiday story.*
4. *Dress as your favorite holiday character. Is it from a movie, a song, or a traditional holiday outfit...there is a world of possibilities.*
5. *Draw a holiday picture.*
6. *Nothing says holiday spirit like a nice cup of hot cocoa.*
7. *The only thing better than a Christmas tree is a homemade tree. Use your imagination and make one out of anything you like.*
8. *Build a snowflake.*
9. *Create your own holiday card for your mentor.*





# FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

FAMILY ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)

MATERIALS

- THE POLAR EXPRESS MOVIE
- MOVIE SNACKS / TREATS

DIRECTIONS

**Movie Guide:**

*The Polar Express is a movie about believing in the spirit of Christmas as you follow the journey and magical adventure of a young boy to the North Pole on the Polar Express.*

**Ideas:**

- *The main character is bestowed with a silver bell as the first gift of Christmas. Ask your kids to consider what they would wish for if they received the first gift.*







# A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS

FAMILY ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)

MATERIALS

- A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS
- MOVIE SNACKS / TREATS

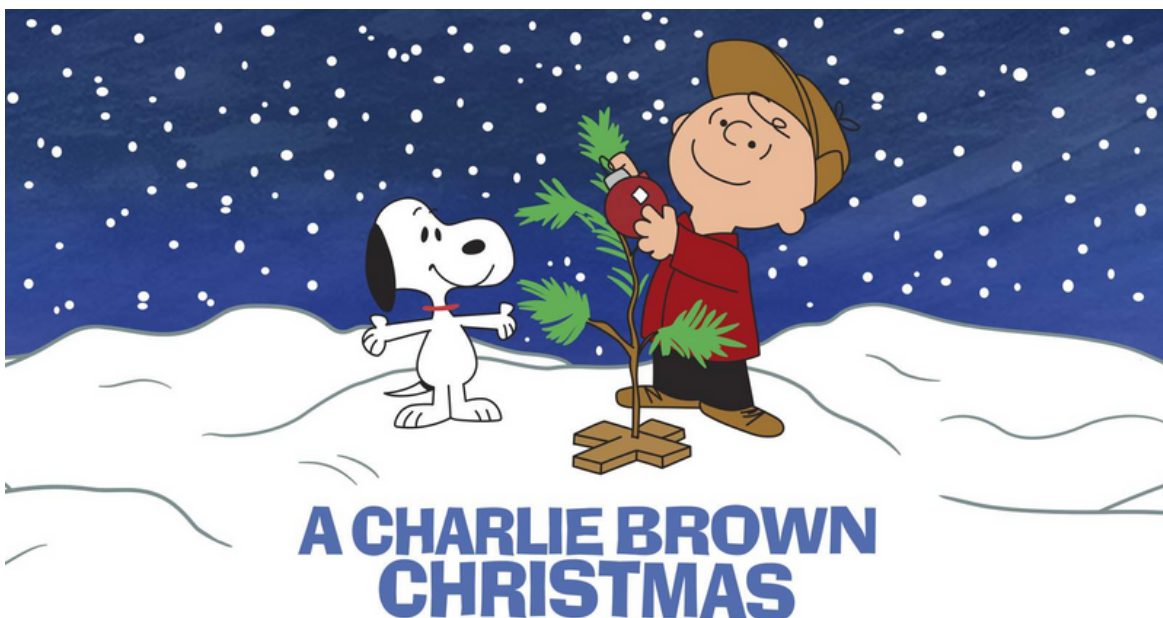
DIRECTIONS

## **Movie Guide:**

*Peanuts "A Charlie Brown Christmas" will air on the PBS channel on December 13th*

## **Lessons to discuss from the movie:**

- Meaning of the season
- Understanding the effects of commercialism on things that are important
- Expressing gratitude (even in tough situations)
- Focusing on helping others
- Doing the right thing
- Making something good out of something bad
- Dealing with different friendships
- Seeing the good in people
- Working with difficult personalities





# CHRISTMAS RICE CRISPY TREATS

FAMILY ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)

CHRISTMAS RICE CRISPY TREATS

**YIELD:** 12-14 SERVINGS **PREP TIME:** 15 MINUTES **COOK:** 5 MINUTES **TOTAL TIME:** 20 MINUTES

## **INGREDIENTS:**

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 10 ounces marshmallows (or 4 cups miniature marshmallows)
- 6 cups crispy rice cereal
- 12 to 14 candy canes
  
- Decorations:
  - Red and green gel icing
  - M&Ms
  - colored sugar



## **INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Line a baking sheet with waxed paper or parchment paper.
2. Melt the butter and the marshmallows in a large saucepan over medium heat, stirring frequently, until the marshmallows melt completely.
3. Immediately stir in the crispy rice cereal. Spread the mixture onto the prepared baking sheet, so that the rice crispy treats are about 1/2- to 3/4-inch thick.
4. Spray a sharp knife generously with cooking spray. Use it to cut the rice crispy treats into large triangles.
5. Break or cut the candy canes into 3-inch pieces. Insert a candy cane into the bottom of each rice crispy treat triangle to form the trunk of the Christmas tree.
6. Let the rice crispy treats cool completely before decorating with icing, candies, and colored sugar.



# MAGICAL REINDEER CHOW

FAMILY ACTIVITY (ALL AGES)

MAGICAL REINDEER CHOW

**YIELD:** 5 SERVINGS **PREP TIME:** 45 MINUTES **COOK:** 0 MINUTES **TOTAL TIME:** 45 MINUTES

## INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups white chocolate chips
- Optional: 3 tablespoons coconut oil
- 3 cups Rice Chex
- 1 cup miniature marshmallows
- 1 cup thin pretzels
- 3/4 cup M&Ms (divided)
- 1/2 cup salted nuts
- 1/2 cup raisins (or dried cranberries)
- 2 tablespoons gold sprinkles



## INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Prepare a baking sheet by lining it with aluminum foil and set aside.
2. Place the white chocolate chips and coconut oil, if using, in a large microwave-safe bowl. Microwave until melted, stirring after every 45 seconds to prevent the white chocolate from overheating.
3. Add the Chex, marshmallows, pretzels, 1/2 cup of the M&Ms, nuts, and the raisins to the white chocolate, and stir until everything is completely coated with a thin layer of white chocolate.
4. Scrape the candy out onto the prepared baking sheet and smooth it into a thin layer.
5. Sprinkle the remaining 1/4 cup of M&Ms on top and press down gently to adhere them. Adding some candies on top keeps them from being coated in white chocolate and gives your reindeer chow a pop of bright color. If you're using edible glitter or sprinkles, dust that all over the top of the candy.
6. Refrigerate the reindeer chow for at least 20 minutes to set the white chocolate.
7. Once set, break it into small pieces to serve.