



♥ **Helping Little Hearts Heal** ♥  
A Summer Memory Garden Guide

A watercolor illustration of a sunny day. A bright yellow sun with rays is in the upper left, partially obscured by soft blue and white clouds. The background is a mix of light blue, yellow, and white washes. In the lower left, there is a small garden with green grass, yellow and blue flowers, and a few rocks. In the lower right, there is a patch of dark brown soil with two terracotta pots, one of which is tipped over, spilling small dark seeds. Three green leaf-shaped callouts are positioned in the lower right area, each containing a point about creating a memory garden.

# Sunshine and heavy feelings

Summer is a time for play, but for a child who has lost someone special, the quiet days can feel a bit heavy.

Creating a Memory Garden is a gentle, hands-on way for children to:

Express their feelings without needing big words.

Honor their loved one.

See the beauty of life continuing to grow.

# Jumping in the puddles of grief

Children process loss differently than adults. They grieve in puddles. They may be very sad one moment and want to go play outside the next. This is a natural, healthy way for them to cope. Let them jump in and out of the puddle at their own pace.



# Activity: Painted Memory Stones

Rocks are strong and lasting—just like our love for the people we miss.

## What You'll Need



**1. Clean the Canvas:**  
Wash yard stones and dry them in the sun.

**2. Pick a Theme:**  
Ask, What was their favorite color? or What reminds you of them?

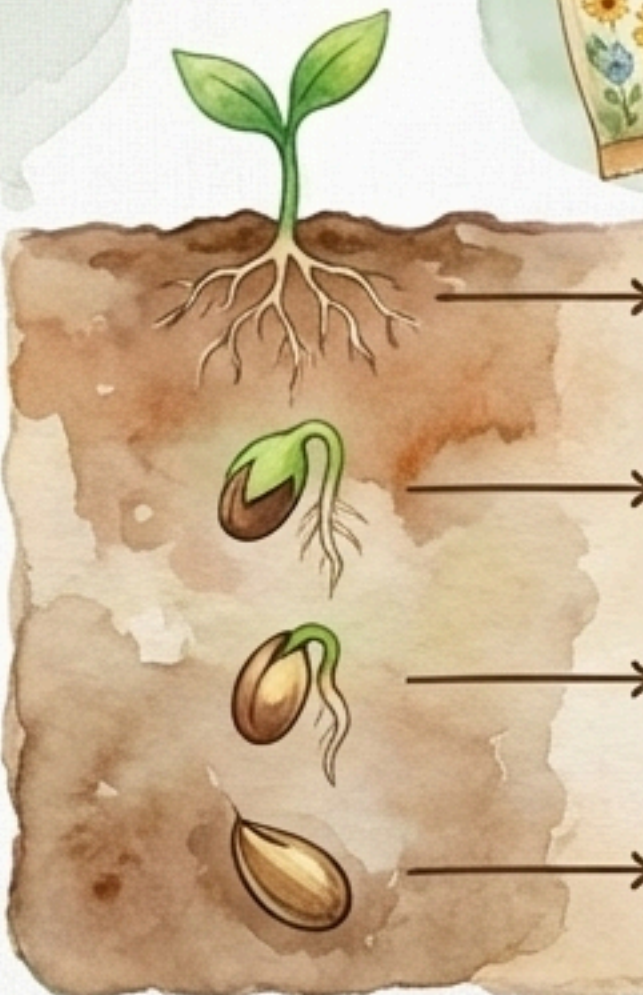
**3. Get Creative:**  
Paint bright colors, hearts, initials, or sunshine.

**4. Place the Stone:**  
Find a special home for the rock in your garden.

# Activity: Planting Seeds of Hope

Watching a flower grow is a gentle lesson in nature's cycle.

## What You'll Need





→ **4. Watch it Grow:** Check the plants together. Blooming flowers serve as a living tribute.

→ **2. The Wish Planting:** As they drop the seed, encourage them to say a favorite memory or thank you to their loved one.

→ **3. Water and Wait:** Remind them that just like flowers, our hearts need time, sunshine, and care to feel better.

→ **1. Prepare the Earth:** Clear a small space and loosen the soil together.



# Activity: Nature Scavenger Hunt

Explore the backyard or park to find these five special items. Talk about why they are special as you find them.

Stop 1



**Something Soft:**  
To remind you of  
a kind word or  
warm hug.

Stop 2



**Something Bright:**  
To remind you of a  
happy memory or  
a laugh.

Stop 3



**A Unique Leaf:**  
Because there is no  
one else exactly like  
the one you lost.

Stop 4



**Something Strong:**  
To remind you  
that you are  
brave.

Stop 5



**A Sound in Nature:**  
Imagine it's a little  
hello from your  
loved one.

# The garden of emotions

Every physical task in the garden helps process a different piece of the emotional journey.



**Painted Stones →  
Permanence & Strength**  
(Anchoring love into something  
that won't blow away)



**Planting Seeds →  
Hope & Growth**  
(Learning that hearts can  
heal with time and care)



**Scavenger Hunt →  
Connection & Awareness**  
(Finding signs of love in  
the everyday world)



**Memory Jar →  
Safety & Transition**  
(Preparing to carry memories  
through changing seasons)

## The Living Bridge

As summer fades, seeing flowers wither can feel sad for a child. Use this moment to talk about the Living Bridge.



Explain that just like we go to sleep at night to wake up refreshed, the garden needs to rest, too. The roots stay warm underground, holding onto the earth, just like we hold onto our love in our hearts. The life of the garden is still there, waiting for spring.

# The Garden Treasures Memory Jar

Before the first frost, create a tactile connection your child can keep indoors to help them through the secondary loss of the changing season.



**Seal with Love:** Tie a ribbon. Whenever you miss the garden, hold this jar and remember our shared sunshine.

**Harvest the Memories:** Collect special summer items—a dried seed pod, colorful leaves, a unique pebble, or a tiny photo.

**The Soil of Home:** A foundational layer of dried garden soil or sand at the bottom.



## *Feelings are like the weather*

Kids need to know that it is okay to feel sad, angry, confused, or even nothing at all.

Validate every feeling by reminding them that emotions change like the weather, and that is perfectly okay.

*Try saying: I'm feeling a little sad today because I miss them. It's okay if you feel sad, too, or if you just want to play. I'm here for whichever one you need.*



## *Follow their lead in the garden*

You don't have to have a big talk all at once. Use gardening as a natural bridge. While painting or digging, ask open-ended questions like, If this flower could tell them one thing today, what would it say?

## *Be okay with I don't know.*

Children ask big questions about life and death. It is perfectly okay to admit you don't have the answers.

*Try saying: That is a really big question. I'm not exactly sure, but I do know that we loved them very much.*



## *Love continues to grow*

Grief doesn't have a summer vacation, but it doesn't have to take over the whole season. By creating a memory garden together, you are teaching your child that even though seasons change and flowers rest, love continues to grow in new and beautiful ways.



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