



# Media Kit

  
Childhood carries on.™



# Who We Are

## Mission

We give grieving children experiences that change their lives forever.

## Vision

Every grieving child deserves to live a life rich with possibility.

Experience Camps is an award-winning non-profit that transforms the lives of grieving children through summer camp programs and innovative, year-round initiatives.

Through compassion, connection, and play, we allow grieving children to embody a life full of hope and possibility. By amplifying their voices, we are creating a more grief-sensitive culture.



# Background

Experience Camps began in 2009, as one camp serving 27 boys in Maine. Over the last 13 years, we have grown to serve nearly 1000 kids and teens at 10 camps in 5 locations around the country.

Camp provides an opportunity for children to be surrounded by peers who “get it” and allows them to focus on the joys of childhood instead of the grief that can wear them down. At camp, grief activities are supervised by grief specialists who facilitate peer-support opportunities and coping techniques for the campers.

With all our gained knowledge from camp, we then applied our hundreds of thousands of hours with grieving kids to create other year-round programs and expert- driven digital content that supports millions of grieving children while building a grief- sensitive culture.

**This includes our content on GRIEF SUCKS ([www.griefsucks.com](http://www.griefsucks.com)) for teens, [TikTok](#), [Minecraft](#) and other platforms.**



# What Makes Us Unique

**We transform the lives of grieving children through three pillars:**

## 1. Camp

We provide young people with a week-long, no-cost overnight camp that is clinically informed. Our camps provide a space where children can experience the joy of childhood while learning to navigate their feelings with others who have experienced grief firsthand.

## 2. Community

We meet children where they are — in their schools and communities, and on YouTube, TikTok, Minecraft, and other platforms — to offer innovative content and experiences that normalize their grief and builds new pathways to grief support.

## 3. Culture

Every one of us will experience grief. We're helping to build a more grief-sensitive society by amplifying the voices and insights of the young people we serve.

# Why Our Work Matters

Approximately six million children in the U.S. will experience the death of a parent, sibling, or primary caregiver by the time they turn 18. Grieving young people are more likely to endure mental- health challenges, poor academic performance, and negative long-term physical and financial outcomes than non-grieving peers. Left unaddressed, childhood grief can undermine a child's future. But with the proper interventions and an ecosystem of support around them, it can lead to remarkable resilience.

# Rates of childhood grief

**6 MILLION**

U.S. children will have experienced the death of a parent or sibling by age 18.

# The racial grief gap

By age 10,

Black and Brown children are 2X more likely to have dealt with the death of their father and 3X more likely to have dealt with the death of their mother.

Black children

make up 14% of U.S. children, and compose 20% of those experiencing the death of a parent to COVID.

65% of all children

experiencing COVID-associated orphanhood or the death of their primary caregiver are of a racial or ethnic minority.

# Potential impacts of childhood bereavement

- Childhood grief is associated with developmental disruptions, including relationship, academic, and career functioning; substance abuse; mental-health challenges, including depression and suicide; and poverty.
- Deaths of relatives who represent key sources of social support can fundamentally alter youths' economic security and, in turn, the success and timing of their transition to adulthood.
- Children who experience a parent's death are 50% more likely to die by early adulthood.
- Death has an intergenerational impact. Among adults who lost a parent when they were growing up, 79% said that when they became a parent, they missed the guidance of the parent who died; 80% said the experience was the hardest thing they ever had to face.



# The need for grief support

## 89% of Americans

think that everyone should learn to talk about grief, but 70% don't know what to say or do when someone is grieving.

## 86% of Americans

say that grief should be addressed as an important mental health issue.

## 63% of children

participating in Experience Camps reported using their “grief skills” to help others cope with the pandemic.



# Facts and Figures

MISSION	FOUNDED	LOCATIONS	AGES SERVED
<p>We give grieving children experiences that will change their lives forever.</p>	<p>2009</p>	<p>We offer twelve week-long, overnight summer camp programs in California, Georgia, Maine, Michigan, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, serving grieving children from 42 states and 7 countries.</p>	<p>Ages 8 - 18 directly served</p> <p>Educational and awareness campaigns reach people of all ages</p>

# Facts and Figures

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- Children who have experienced the death of a parent, sibling, or primary caregiver.
- 65% of participating children come from families below the national median household income
- 36% of participating children are BIPOC

## COST

No cost for children and families

## CAMP RETURN

88% of our campers return year after year, for an average of five years

## GROWTH RATE

23% increase in applications in 2020 (rolled over for 2021). 500% increase in the waiting list over the past five years.

# Facts and Figures

CAMPERs	VOLUNTEERS	IMPACT
<p>900 enrolled in 2022; 1,080 in 2023; projecting 1350 in 2024.</p>	<p>Approx 500 volunteers per year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 74% saw a positive change in their child’s self-confidence</li> <li>• 65% saw positive change in their child’s ability to work through challenging moments</li> <li>• 69% saw positive change in their child’s optimism and hope for the future</li> </ul>

# Awards:

## 2023 FINALIST FOR FAST COMPANY INNOVATION BY DESIGN AWARD (FOR EXPERIENCECRAFT)

## 2023 ANTHEM AWARD, GOLD

Experience Camps won the 2023 prestigious Gold Anthem Award, launched by the Webby Awards “in response to the prevalence social good has taken within the national conversation and cultural zeitgeist in recent years.” We were the top prize winner in the category of “Human & Civil Rights: Community Engagement.”

## 2023 TELLY AWARD, GOLD; "MOST IMPACTFUL FILM," Social Impact Film Festival

The documentary “Inside a Grief Camp,”--which takes viewers inside one of our camp programs--won the prestigious Telly Award in 2023, and “Most Impactful Film” award at the Social Impact Film Festival.

## 2022 CAUSEARTIST PICK

Our CEO Sara Deren was named by Causeartist “one of 32 nonprofit leaders who will impact the world.”



# Spokespersons for Experience Camps



The following four Experience Camps staff members are available for interviews:



## Sara Deren

**Founder Chief Executive Officer**

Under Sara's leadership, Experience Camps has conducted original research on the state of grief and launched 13 camp programs nationally as well as virtual spaces and community programs for kids and teens. She received her MBA from Columbia and blends her background in business & technology with her passion for the mission. In 2020, she received an award for Best Entrepreneurial, Scaling, from Connecticut Entrepreneur Awards and was named a Patriots Difference Maker by The Kraft Family and Patriots Foundation. Sara was named by Causeartist one of 32 non-profit leaders who will impact the world in 2022, and was a mentor at SWSW in 2023.

### Topics can speak to:

- How and why she founded Experience Camps
- How the model for this grief camp was built on joy
- How her business and finance background helped her scale our non-profit
- What we've learned from thousands of grieving children



## Brie Overton

**FT, LPC, NCC, Chief Clinical Officer**

Brie is a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri – St. Louis in the Department of Counseling and Family Therapy, where she educates and supervises masters and doctoral level students on grief-specific issues in counseling. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor and specializes in anticipatory loss, grief and bereavement, life transitions, and working with underserved populations. At Experience Camps, she oversees the clinical model and application of grief theory and peer support across programs. She is a member of the Association for Death Education and Counseling and has worked in clinical roles at Experience Camps since 2016.

### Topics can speak to:

- How to help young people navigate grief
- How stigmatized grief (overdose, homicide, suicide, etc.) is different
- Debunking the myth of the 5 Stages of Grief and why they still linger
- How to help kids feel less alone/weird in their grief



# Michelle Cove

**Director of Communications**

Michelle draws on her 25+ years as a professional media maker to create content that educates the public on childhood grief and brings awareness to our work. She is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, journalist, and national bestselling author whose projects have been featured on numerous national platforms including The Today Show, The Washington Post, and The New York Times. From 2014 to 2020, Michelle was the founder and Executive Director of MEDIAGIRLS, a nonprofit that empowers young women to harness the power of media to uplift one another.

**Topics can speak to:**

- The gifts she gained from experiencing the death of both parents
- How our culture can do better at showing up for those who are grieving
- Why “I’m sorry for your loss” isn’t cutting it – as shared by our campers
- 5 things you can do to support someone who is grieving



# Jesse Moss

**Director of Marketing**

Jesse is in charge of developing strategies and content to create a more grief-sensitive culture and advocate for grieving children. She's the voice and creator behind the Experience Camps TikTok (over 55 million views). Jesse has been featured talking about grief on outlets like Vogue, ABC, and The Huffington Post. Jesse was also a speaker at SXSW 2023 on the panel, #Deathtok: How Gen Z is Reimagining Grief and Loss. Before diving into the world of grief, Jesse worked as a Digital Strategist in the Obama Administration, a Social Media Manager at Warner Bros. Television, and an Associate Producer at E! Entertainment.

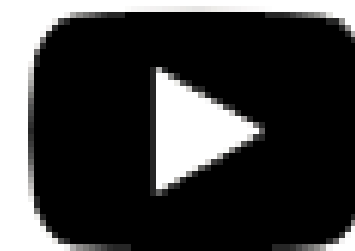
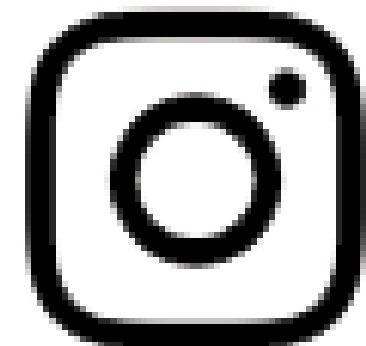
**Topics can speak to:**

- How being queer impacted the way she experienced grief
- How being the child and a sibling of addicts impacted the way she experienced grief
- How she healed by working with grieving kids at Experience Camps
- Sibling grief and parental grief in her twenties and thirties
- GenZ and the ways they approach death, dying, and grief





# Check Out Our Social Media



[@experiencecamps](#)



Sample Press  
We've Been  
Featured In:

THE CHRONICLE  
OF PHILANTHROPY



EducationWeek®



The New York Times





# experience camps

**For more information,**

**Contact Michelle Cove,**  
Director of Communications  
E: [michelle@experiencecamps.org](mailto:michelle@experiencecamps.org)  
P: 617-319-4434