



CALM WATERS

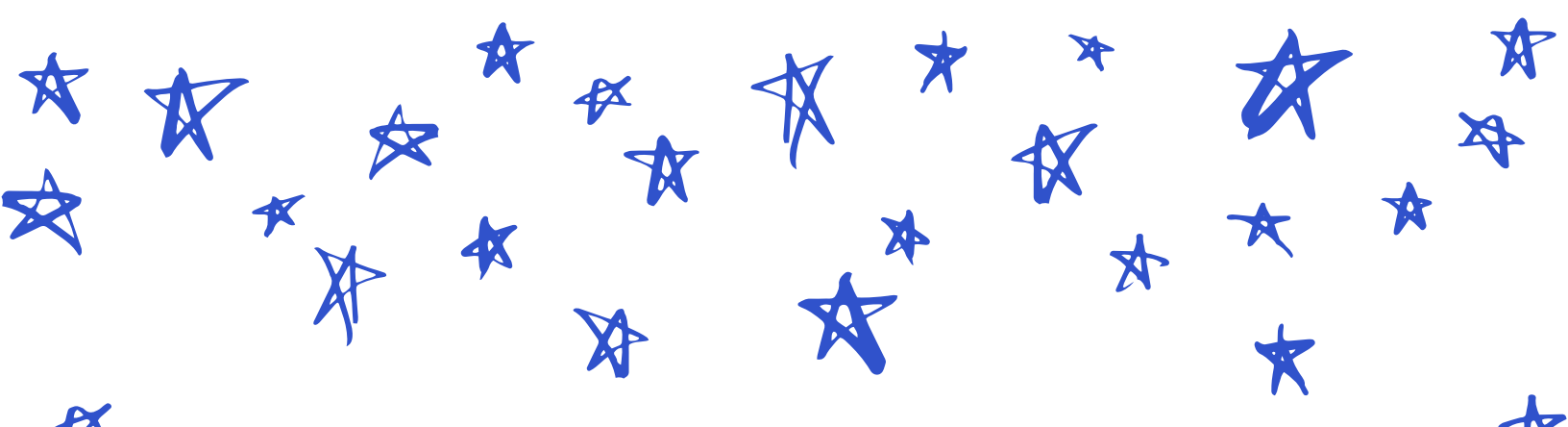


Center for Children and Families

COPING WITH GRIEF THROUGH THE SUMMER

A WORKBOOK

The pressures around the summer holidays can be challenging after the death of a loved one. Here are action items that may help navigate summer events and memories.



COPING WITH GRIEF THROUGH THE SUMMER

PLAN AHEAD.

Anxiety and anticipation leading up to summer events and holidays can be more intense than the actual events. Planning can help lower anxiety and stress for both adults and children. If you have children, involve them in discussions about what they would like to do. **This will give them a sense of control** during this emotional time. Once you've decided what you will and won't do, share your decisions with friends and family.

DON'T LET OTHER PEOPLE DETERMINE WHAT YOU SHOULD (OR SHOULDN'T) DO.

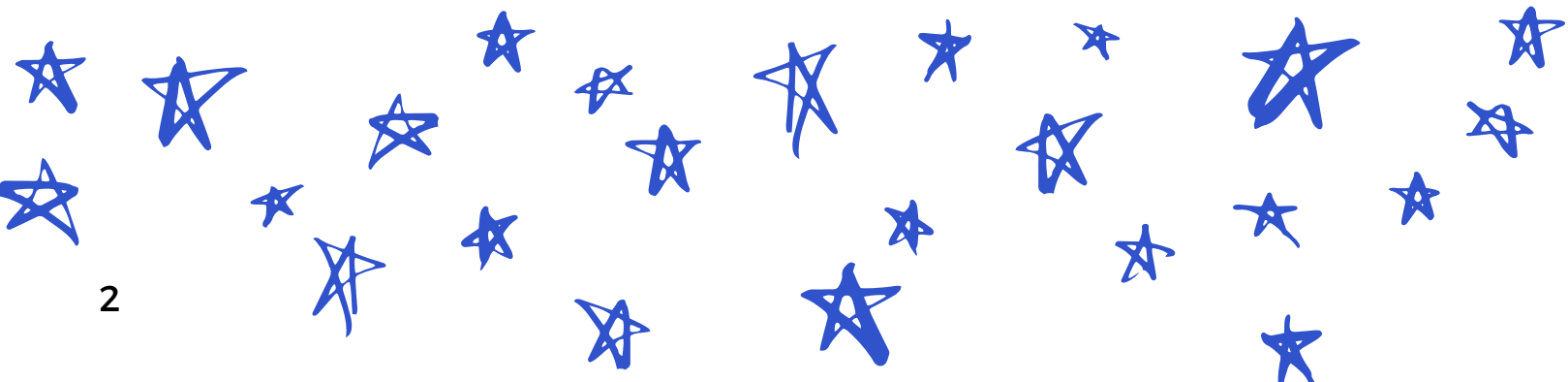
You don't have to do what others think you should do. Give yourself the right to do what you want to do!

ACCEPT LIMITATIONS.

You may not be able to do all the things you've always done. Which aspects of the summer are especially challenging for your family? Consider scaling back or changing something you may have done in the past, and consider what has been or might be especially enjoyable or meaningful to your family.

BE INFORMED BEFORE ATTENDING EVENTS.

Find out who will be there, how long it will last, and whether you need to do anything to prepare for it. As a family, brainstorm ways you and your children want to respond to questions or offers help from others.



ASK FOR HELP, EVEN WHEN IT'S HARD TO DO.

If it feels right, allow people to help in concrete ways such as cleaning, cooking, baking, shopping, childcare, and running errands. Sometimes we worry about burdening others, but more often than not, they are eager to help.

COPING WITH FEELINGS AS THEY ARISE.

It is natural for children as well as adults to experience a wide range of emotions while grieving. As hard as this time may be, it is important to express and cope with feelings as they happen. Avoid minimizing your own and your child's feelings or trying to put a "positive" spin on their expressions.

For example, saying "It's important to focus on the good times you had with your dad," communicates that you don't want your child to hear about painful things. Instead, validate and reflect the child's emotion by saying, "**it makes sense that you really miss your dad right now and that you wish he were here.**" Finding ways to positively cope with these emotions are important. Be sure you and your children have identified positive coping skills to use when difficult feelings arise.

ENGAGE IN SELF-CARE.

The summertime can be physically and emotionally draining, especially if you're grieving. Encourage rest and quiet play at times, and plan for healthy eating and **hydration** for the entire family. Always remember to take care of yourself. Give yourself a break, surround yourself with a strong support system, and take time to recharge.

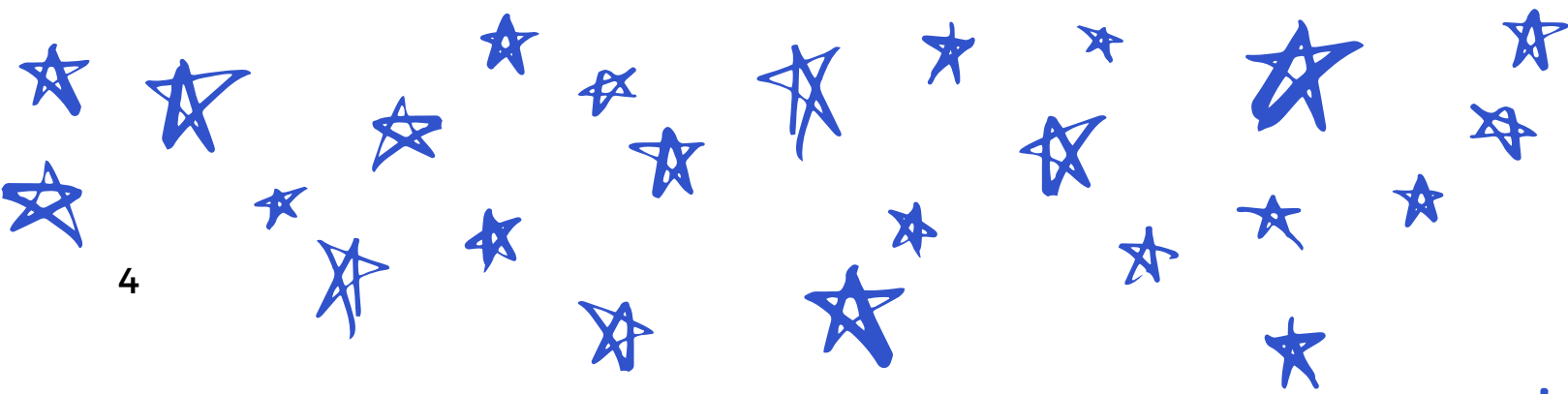


FIND WAYS TO REMEMBER AND HONOR THE PERSON WHO DIED.

Include memories of the person who died in your summer plans. Encourage children to make something meaningful specifically for this person. Decide as a family where your family should place these items.

Ideas:

1. Light a memorial candle. Invite children and other friends/family to share memories after the candle is lit.
2. Write a card or letter to the person who died.
3. Write memories on strips of paper and create a paper chain.
4. Hang a special decoration in memory of the person, such as a plant or souvenir.
5. Buy a gift the person would have liked and donate it to a charity.
6. Set a special memorial place at the table during holiday meals.
7. Create a memorabilia table or corner where you can place photos, stuffed animals, toys, cards, foods, and any other kinds of mementos.
8. Food can be a great spark for sharing memories, share your person's favorite food.



CELEBRATE CHANGE AND CREATE NEW TRADITIONS.

The summer season is steeped in holidays honoring family members and events where certain family members previously took part in vacations or traditions. This is why people on a grief journey sometimes choose to ignore the summer holidays and traditions altogether. Many difficult reminders can open the door to sadness when engaging in usual transitions. Suppress the urge to ignore the summer holidays because they may seem too painful to endure. Decide what works for you and what doesn't - and edit accordingly.

It's important that children are given the opportunity to celebrate their summer events without feeling bad or feeling guilty. Involve your children in discussions about what they would like to do. You and your family may decide to keep everything the same or change everything - or you may fall somewhere in-between.

Establish traditions with your children, even new ones that may be different from past rituals. Your kids may not remember the details of 2004, but year-in, year-out traditions will stay with them for a lifetime.

FAMILY PLAN FOR THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS & VACATION

After creating your lists for each item, identify who will be responsible for each task you wish to keep/create.

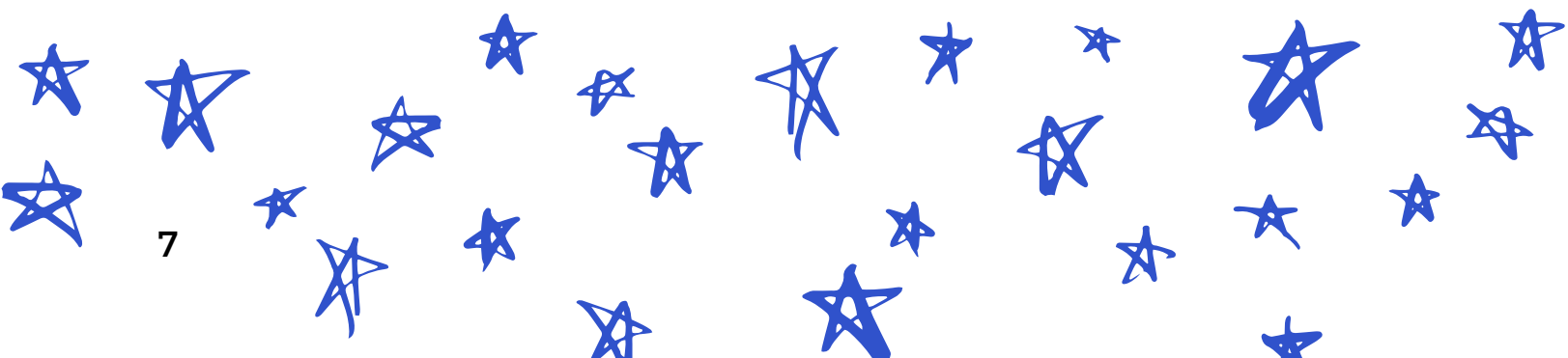
FOOD

What foods do we typically cook during the summer holidays? What are the favorite foods of the person who died? Who can help this year? Do we want to cook at home or go out? What will we bring to parties?

List what you normally do and star the items you want to keep.

List new summer traditions you want to start.

Activity: On this page, draw a picture of your old and new food and meal traditions. What will the table look like? Who will be there? Who will sit where?



EVENTS, PARTIES, AND FAMILY GATHERINGS

Do we want to attend our usual parties this year? Will we host a gathering? Do we want to include the memory of the person who died? How will we handle conversations about the person who died? What about conversations with people who do not know about our grief story?

List what you normally do and star the items you want to keep.

List new traditions you want to start.

TRAVEL

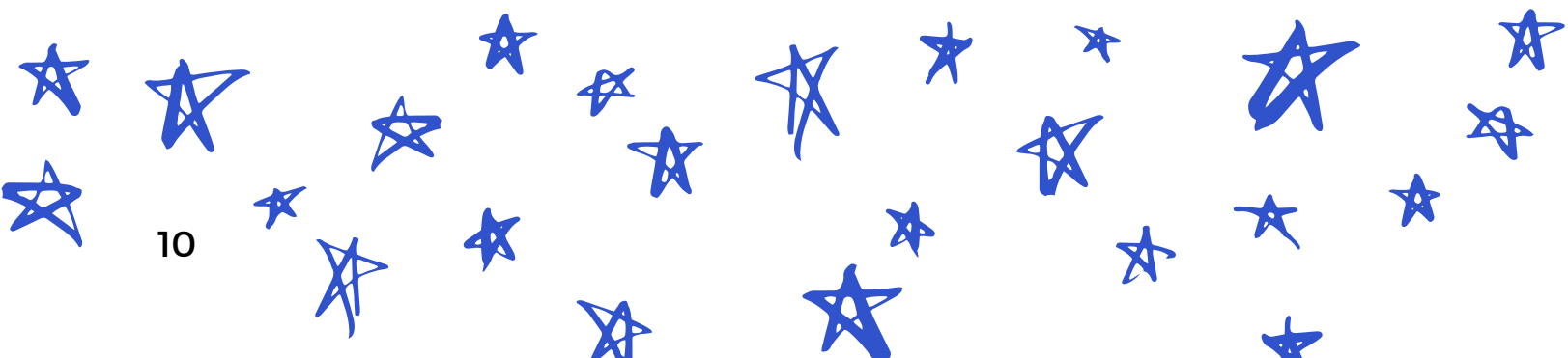
Summertime often means time for trips, travel, and vacation. Do we want to travel this year? What were the favorite travel destinations of the person who died? Do we want to travel to a place or an event to honor the person we are grieving? Consider planning a family vacation to one of your loved one's favorite locations, or go somewhere they always wanted to visit but didn't get the chance to. These plans can be as big as traveling abroad or as simple as going to a nearby park.

List what you normally do and star the items you want to keep.

List new traditions you want to start.

Travel Activity: On this page, draw a picture of your old and new travel plans. You will be creating a flower pot with summer activities to honor your grief journey and plan for the summer break.

What are new summer events are important to you?



TRADITIONS

What summer traditions are connected to the person who has died?

What new traditions would we like to create?

(Explore this without worrying what others will think!)

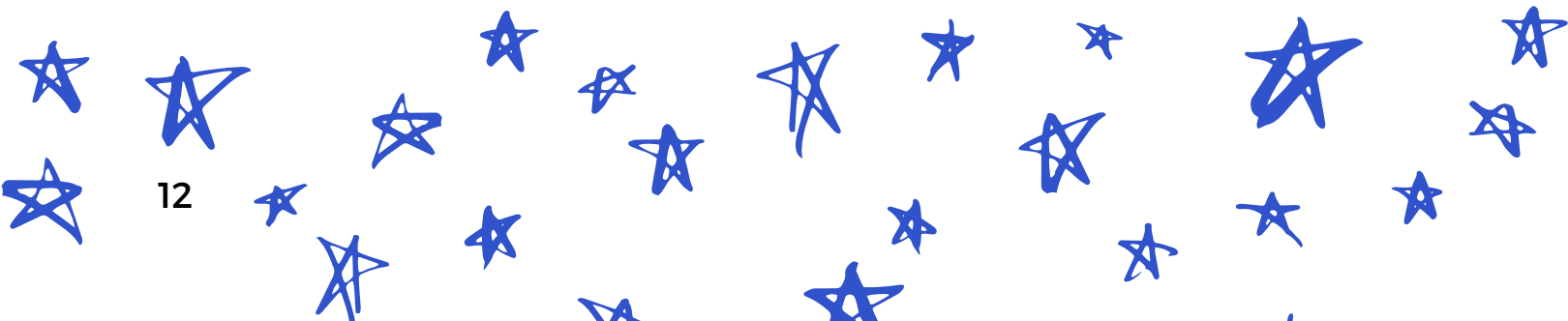
How will we carve out time for ourselves and our reactions?

Who can we go to for support and care?

List what you normally do and star the items you want to keep.

List new traditions you want to start.

Traditions Activity: Now, have **each member** in your family answer the question about their favorite tradition and which new traditions do they want to start.



POST-HOLIDAYS

What have you traditionally done for July, August, and the first day of school? What did the person whom you are grieving enjoy doing? Summer months can be busy, so it's helpful to have moments to honor past memories connected to the person you are grieving.

List what you've done in the past and star the items you want to keep.

List new traditions you want to start.

Plan a family outing for under \$50.

REFLECTION

Just as you set aside time to have a family meeting to create a plan for the summer season, it's equally important to meet and talk about how things went for each of you.

Let family members know ahead of time that there will be a chance to discuss what worked, what didn't, what you want to do differently next year, and to check in about how people are doing after the summer holidays. It is important to let others know their actions were especially helpful or caring.