

Honoring the Stories of Child Survivors

Skills to Listen to Their Lived Experience
Through the Prism of Childhood Loss



The Dougy Center
The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

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agenda

The Dougy Center: The National Center for
Grieving Children & Families

Loss and Grief from a Child's Perspective

10 Tips to Support Grieving Children

Lived Experience: Stories from Holocaust
Survivors, Their Children, and Their Care
Providers

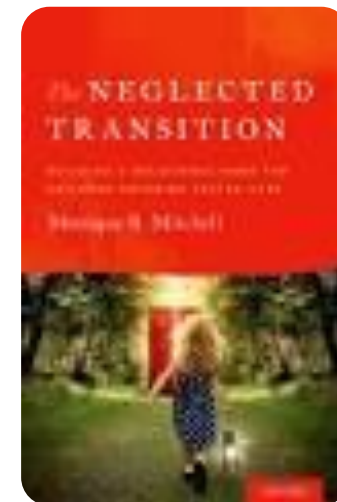
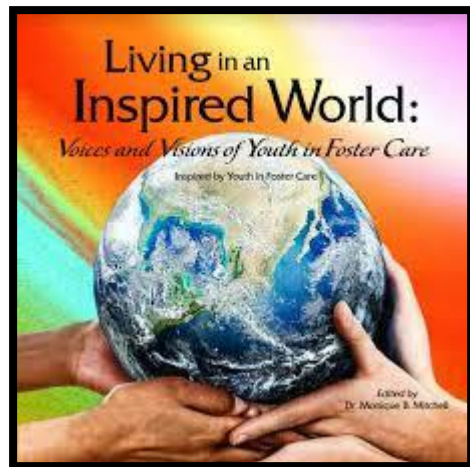
Skills to Listen to Stories of Lived Experience

Q&A



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Background



The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children & Families



www.dougy.org

Loss and Grief from a Child's Perspective

What is **LOSS**?

Death Loss

- Death of a parent
- Death of a child
- Death of a grandparent
- Death of a sibling
- Death of a spouse
- Death of a friend
- Death of a pet

Non-Death Loss

- Loss of a culture and/or community
- Loss of family & friends
- Loss of an identity
- Loss of a language
- Loss of a home
- Loss of safety & security
- Loss of health

(The Loss of) The Assumptive World & Re-creating Meaning

1. The world is benevolent. ➤ (It's a good place.)
2. The world is meaningful. ➤ (It is understandable, therefore predictable and controllable.)
3. The self is worthy. ➤ (I am a decent person and can avoid being harmed by it.)

WHAT IS GRIEF?

Grief is a normal and natural response to loss.

Grief and Childhood Development

Pre-School Age

Declaring Selfhood
& Taking Initiative



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Pre-Adolescence

Getting to Work &
Confronting
Inferiority



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Adolescence

Developing Identity
in a Confusing Time



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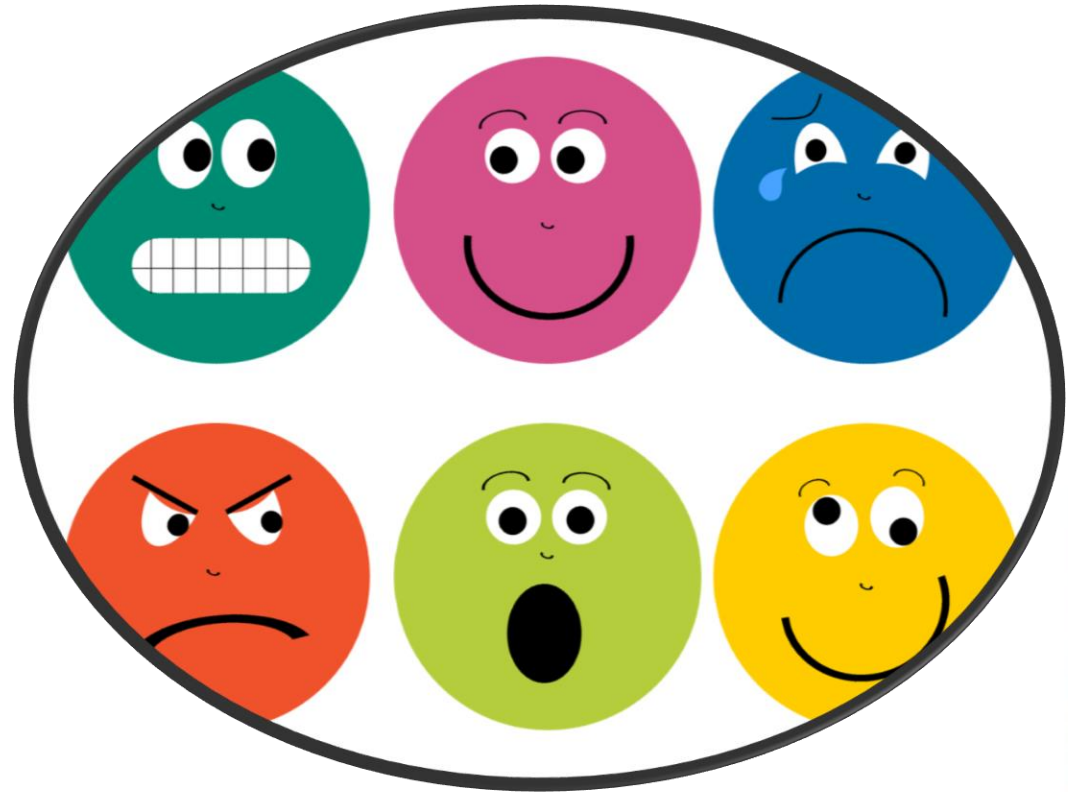
10 Tips to Support Grieving Children

1. Listen



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2. Be open to different ways of grieving



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3. Speak openly
and honestly
about the death



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4. Offer choices



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5. Talk about and remember the person who died



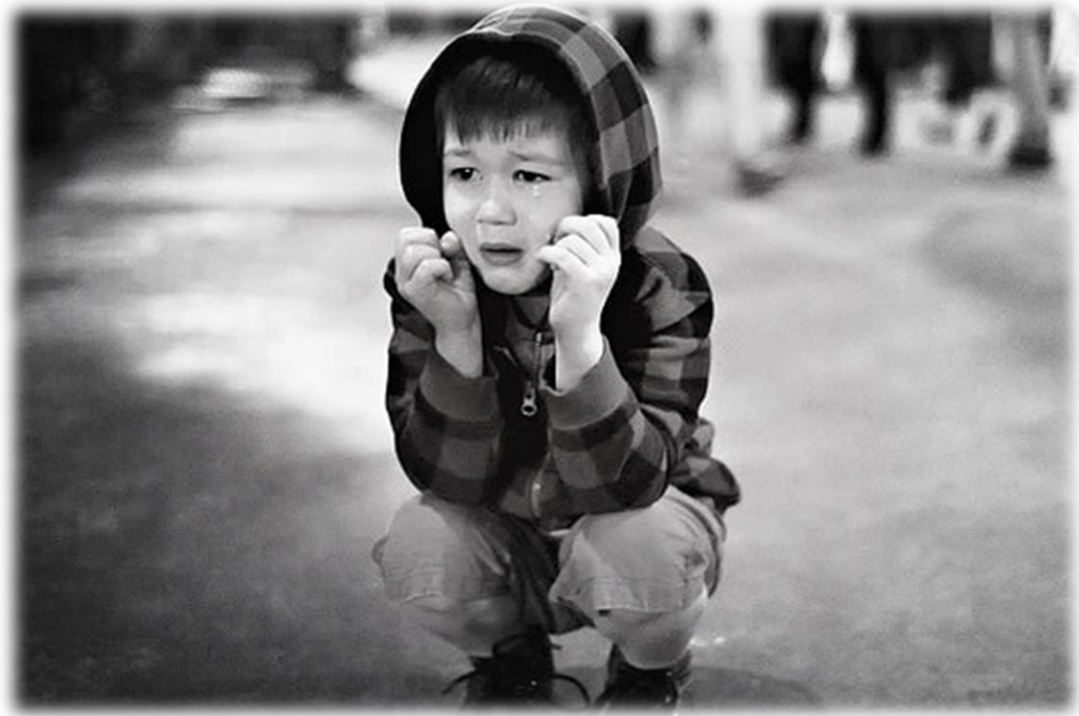
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6. Provide consistency and routine



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7. Be prepared for fears



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8. Provide outlets for grieving and self-expression



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9. Respect that grief does not follow a schedule



10. Find additional sources of support for your child and for yourself



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Lived Experience:

Stories from Child Holocaust Survivors,
Their Children, & Their Care Providers

Holocaust Survivor's Memories of Past Trauma and the Functions of Reminiscence

O'Rourke, N., Canham, S., et al. (2014).
Holocaust survivor's memories of past trauma
and the functions of reminiscence. *The
Gerontologist*, 56, 743-752.
Doi:10.1093/geront/gnu168



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Study Sample

- Location: Israel
- 269 participants
- Born in Poland, Romania, Hungary, or the former Czechoslovakia
- Most participants were 9-21 old during the Holocaust
- Lived under the Nazi rule/occupation in Europe or North Africa
- Immigrated to Israel after World War II as refugees

Some findings:

The ability to reminisce with others with shared lived experience creates a sense of connection

“I was involved in my community with a group of Holocaust survivors about 3 years ago. The survivors struggled to talk about what they went through but I was among the few who said that he has nothing to hide, and it doesn't affect me emotionally to talk about things because you can't change the past. After describing some of the things I went through in the Holocaust, people who had difficulties also began to open up and share their stories.”
(Dov from Haifa)

Some findings:

The importance of being able to guide others and successive generations – to learn from the past and not let history repeat itself – and tying identity to being a survivor

“The memories of what I went through do not belong only to me but also the next generations . . . and to the Jewish people. It is my duty, and the duty of all those who went through the Holocaust, to ensure that what happened to us will be remembered for generations.”

(Adina from Tel Aviv)

Some findings:

Discussion about multiple losses during childhood and its long-term impact

“I had no youth because of the war. . .
They kicked us from our house, from
school, from our friends. Then we were
moved to a labor camp...There are
bitter memories, there were bombings
in the city; I knitted socks for Nazi
soldiers at 10 years of age.”
(Esther from Be'er Sheva)

“I can't forget my parents and siblings.
I was left alone and I suffered a lot.
Every time I think how good they were,
and in the end, what kind of end they
had. I was alone and that, I cannot
forget.”
(Ariel from Haifa)

Toward an Ethnography of Silence: The Lived Presence of the Past in the Everyday Life of Holocaust Trauma Survivors and Their Descendants in Israel

Kidron, C. A. (2009). Toward an ethnography of silence: The lived presence of the past in the everyday life of Holocaust trauma survivors and their descendants in Israel. *Current Anthropology*, 50 (1), 5-27.



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Study Sample

- Location: Israel
- 55 participants
- Children of Holocaust survivors in Israel
- Between 35 and 55 years old
- “Parents had emigrated to Israel from Europe in the late 1940s and 1950s after surviving Nazi extermination camps, forced-labor camps, ghetto incarceration, or periods of hiding”
- Interviewer(researcher) is also a child of Holocaust survivors

Some observations:

“I remember...when I first...I mean I noticed my father's number. I must have been about 4. I asked him why I don't have one, too....

Childhood Curiosity

He laughed...and said I don't get to have one. I said but I wanted a number too, like his [long laugh] He looked at me very seriously and said bad people did it to him and that I shouldn't want one.”

(p.10)

Some observations:

“The Presence of Absence”



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Some observations:

“Self-Preservation”



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The Lived Experience of Providing Care and Support Services for Holocaust Survivors in Australia

Teshuva, K., Brorowski, A., & Wells, Y. (2017). The lived experience of providing care and support services for Holocaust survivors in Australia. *Qualitative Health Research*, 27, 1104-1114.



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Study Sample

- Location: Australia
- 70 “aged care workers” (carers) across 10 focus groups
- 61 females, 9 males
- Job roles includes nurses, personal care workers, home support workers, case managers, activities staff, assessment clinicians, and allied health professionals
- Host sites provided care services or aged care assessment for Holocaust survivors

Some findings:

- **Elevated levels of anxiety, fear, anger, and suspicion compared to other clients:**

“Sometimes they’ll tell you a lot but they’re not telling you significant stuff, like the care they actually need or that they’re not managing at home...because those who were sick and frail back then, during the Holocaust, would be hauled out [and killed]” (p.1108)

“There’s a damn good reason why they are anxious, you know --- ‘I lost everybody in my world’ – or they lived for four years without hardly any food, et cetera” (p.1108)

Some findings:

- **The experience of trauma requires person-centered approaches**

- Building trust

Being friendly, honest, kind, respectful, and reliable

- Providing opportunity for clients to assume control over their own lives

“Never forcing anyone to do something they don’t want to do”

“Working together with the clients”

“Listening to their wishes”

“Reading the situation”

“Being flexible”

Some findings:

- **Taking care in talking about the past**

- Some survivors will want to talk about their past, others will not.
Respect an individual's wishes
Do not ask probing questions
Be prepared to take the time to listen

- **Caring for survivors has an emotional impact**

- Caring for survivors can be stressful. Engage in self-care strategies.
Seek out support from managers and peers
Maintain a sense of humor
Try not to take aggressive behaviors personally
Set realistic boundaries regarding what can and cannot be done

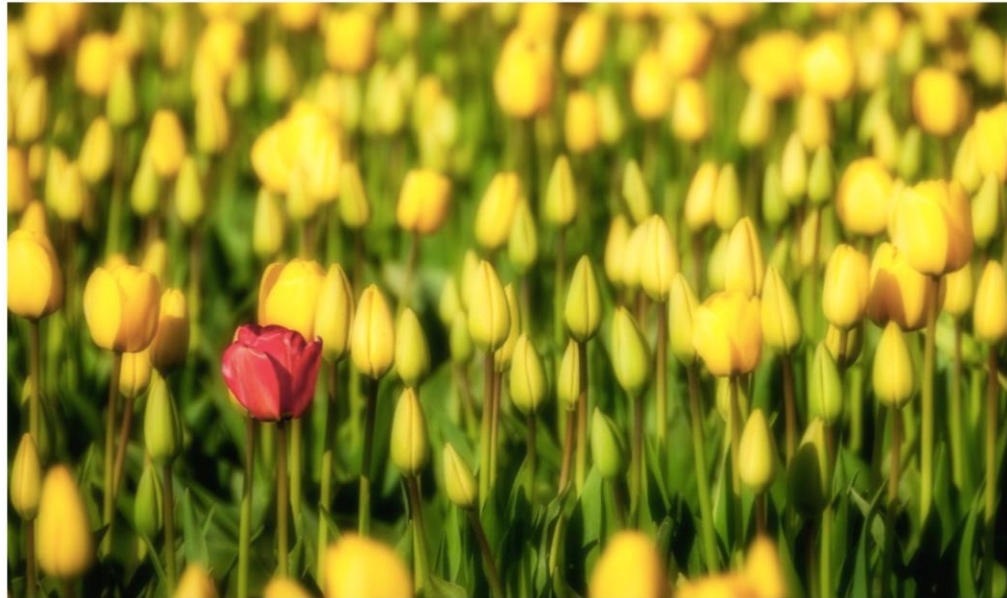
10 Skills to Listen to Stories of Lived Experience

1. Engage in Active Listening



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2. Acknowledge & Affirm Other's Strengths



3. Practice Non-Judgement



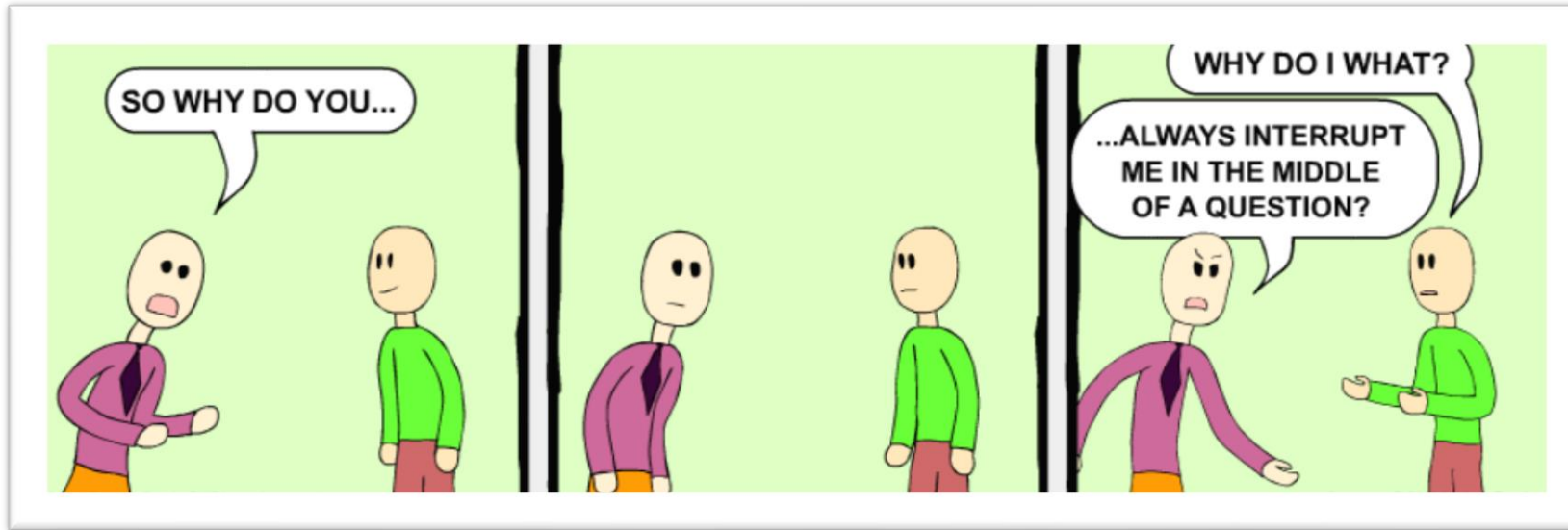
4. Reflect and Respect Language



5. Be Compassionate



6. Don't Interrupt

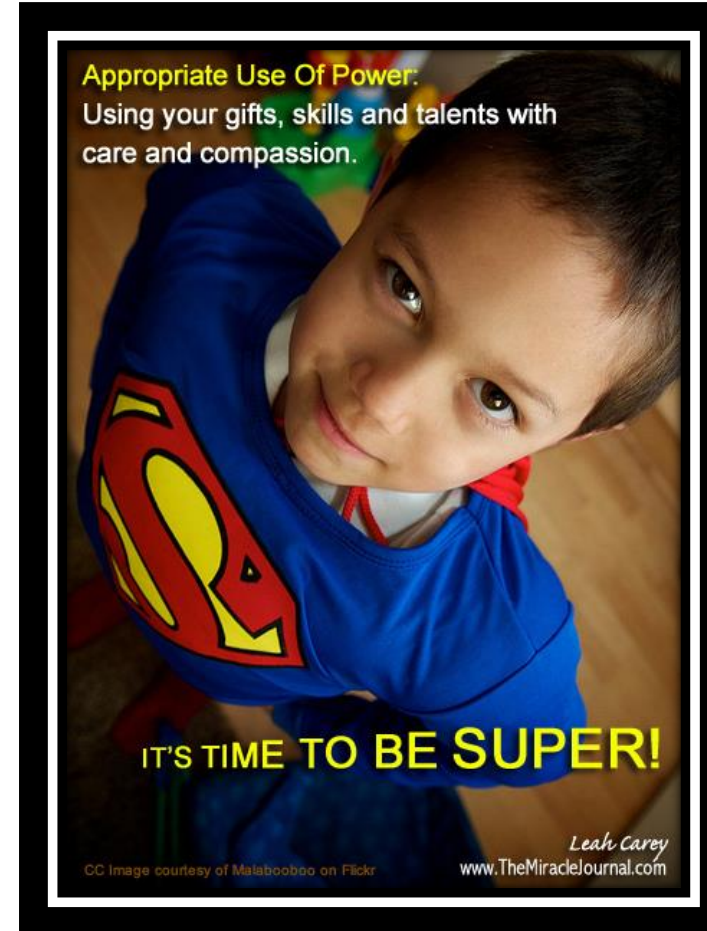


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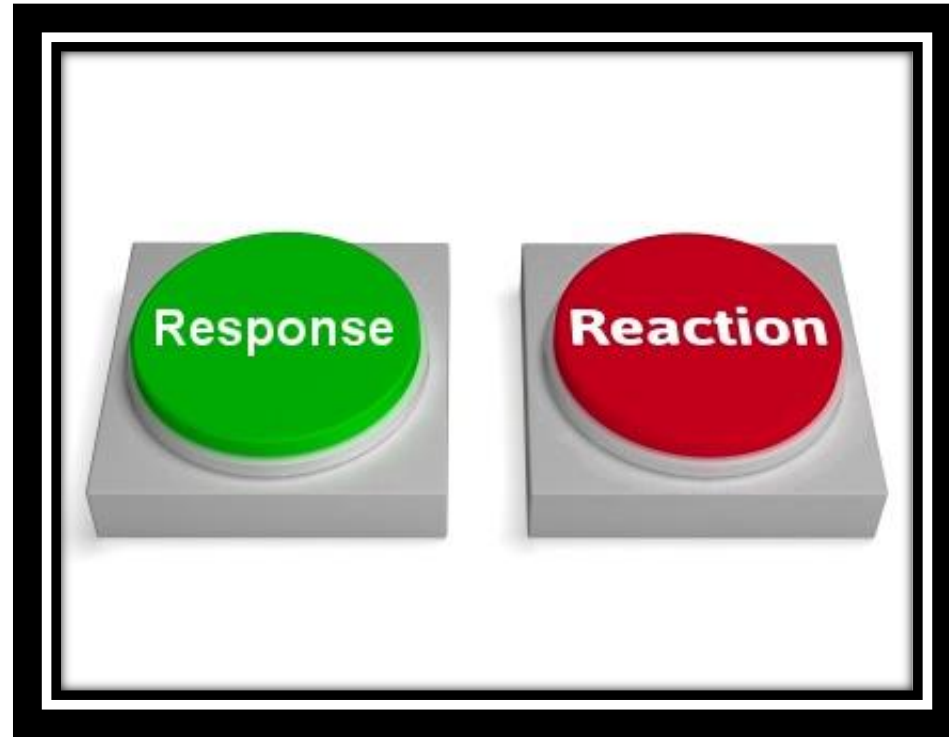
Consider the Intention of Your Inquiries



8. Offer Appropriate Encouragement and Feedback



9. Respond, not React



10. Respect & Utilize Silence



תודה
Dankie Gracias
Спасибо شكراً
Merci Takk
Köszönjük Terima kasih
Grazie Dziękujemy Děkojame
Ďakujeme Vielen Dank Paldies
Kiitos Täname teid 谢谢
Thank You Tak
感謝您 Obrigado Teşekkür Ederiz
Σας ευχαριστούμε 감사합니다
Bedankt ඔබට
Děkuji vám
ありがとうございます
Tack

