
When Someone Dies...

Helpful Guide for Families and Children

Activities

Plant a flower or other seed in memory

Journal- Write letters to the person expressing your thoughts and wishes (tie it onto a helium balloon and send it off)

Frame a special picture of the person and keep it in a special place

Talk about the person and share how special he/she was with relatives, friends, etc.

Make a scrapbook of pictures and fun memories

Make a memory box and put items you have of the person in the box and talk about why you choose those items.

Make a puzzle out of a picture. Mix up the pieces. Take 1 or 2 pieces away. What kind of a new picture can you make now?

Brainstorm ways to let others know how you are feeling.

Draw a memory

List the different kinds of feelings you might have when someone dies and brainstorm ways to handle each of the feelings identified.

Talk about how the deceased person would want the grieving person to feel and do.

Tips on Helping Your Child with Grief

www.griefworksbc.com/DosofHelpingaChild.asp

- Understand that you can't hide feelings from children, no matter what you say, so don't worry about saying the 'right' words.
- Know that some children in grief cry and some don't. Both may be equally affected. Tears are not always necessary with grief.
- Honor the child's feelings of pain and loss. Trying to protect the child from feelings of pain and loss doesn't allow them to feel comfortable with you. They know they have the feelings but cannot express them freely around you.
- Know that the child will respond to the loss. And please don't assume the child will respond to the loss like you have. Each grief journey is unique.
- Give the child the time they need to grieve in their own way. Please don't push the child to talk about it. A child will tell us how he feels in the way he is able and it's usually through his behaviors.
- Have the courage to show your feelings in front of the child. Sometimes adults are reluctant to cry in front of the child. Tears give the child permission to be real, too.
- Include the child in the family sadness. Please don't shut the child out by sending him to the babysitter or to watch a movie.
- Let the child grieve a dead pet before replacing it with another pet.
- Understand that children can only handle bits and pieces of grief at a time. A child may not always want to talk about death.
- Understand that children are wise in the ways of grief. They seem to know that showing their pain or suffering may add to their parents suffering so may keep their own grief hidden. Please don't allow

the child to assume the role of emotional caregiver to the parents.

- Know that when people are grieving, sometimes their appetite disappears for awhile. Don't worry about the child's poor appetite. Give plenty of liquids.
- Tell the child the truth about their loss - that it may always hurt to think about the person who dies but that it will gradually hurt less.
- Understand that children are concrete thinkers. Using abstract language to soften the death is confusing to children. Instead of saying, "Grandpa passed away," say, "Grandpa died." They may not know what passing away means.
- Tell the truth about the possibility of your own death. Don't promise that you won't die. You can say, "I think I will live until I am very, very old but no one knows for sure."
- Say the person's name, for example: "I know your Grandpa died and I'm sure you miss him very much." Please don't be afraid to initiate talking about the death.
- Tell the truth. 'I don't know' is a good answer to 'why' questions.
- Maintain structure, rules, and limits. This provides security when children know that some things have not changed.
- Touch, hold, or hug but always with the child's permission.
- Share your faith if it is appropriate for your family. Talk about what your beliefs are on what happens after death.
- Give the child a choice about going to the funeral but explain what will happen there first. If he is under 8 years old, take along an adult who can leave with him at anytime.
- Recognize children express grief physically by yelling, pounding or running it out.
- Use third-person language when talking to children. It is less threatening. Say, "Many children feel..." instead of "Do you feel...?"
- Talk about the loss whenever the child brings up the subject and answer only

what is asked. Let the child be in charge of what he is ready to hear.

- Tell the child the exact cause of death "Grandma's heart wouldn't work anymore."
- Avoid running away by selling the house and moving; taking a long trip, etc. Children in grief need security in their lives after they have experienced a significant loss.

Community Resources

Affinity Visiting Nurses: Bereavement Coordinator, Hospice

Contact Person: Debra L. Kosmer, MSE, CSW at (920) 236-8500

Appleton Psychiatric and Counseling Center

Contact Person: Vicki Gossens @ (920) 882-6610

Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley: Center for Grieving Children

Contact Person: Loris Damerow at (920) 731-0555

Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley: Youth and Family Counselor

Contact Person: Kathi Danke, MSE, LLP at (920) 731-0555

Counseling Specialists. LLP

Contact Person: Deanna Christensen @ (920) 882-9877

The Samaritan Counseling Center at (920) 886-9319