

Points to Remember:

- * A child may become terrified that he or she will lose someone else they love or rely on. Reassure them that he/she is safe and that you are still here for support.
- * Often children will think or say that they wish someone were dead. If that person does die, the child may think that it is their fault because they wished for it. Work through this issue with the child.
- * Do not dismiss a child's feelings of guilt over the death. Of course the child is not to blame, but his/her feelings can be very strong.



Needs of Grieving Children:

- * Children need to know that they can talk freely with someone who will not judge, criticize or condemn what they might be feeling.
- * Children need an adult they know they can trust with all of their feelings at any time.
- * Children need someone with whom they can ask questions and not feel "stupid" for asking.
- * Children need to be able to express their feelings in a safe and trustworthy environment.

The Role of Adults:

Parents may want to be the primary person in their grieving child's life, however, this is not always the best option. When parents are grieving, they may be hurting too much to be the primary adult for the child. Another adult the child can turn to for support can be very helpful for the child is also grieving.

Call Us:

None of you must go through this alone. If you need to talk further, call the Bereavement Coordinator of Hospice of Visiting Nurse Service at 330-668-4662 or 800-335-1455. We have many resources which you might find valuable while working with your child through your mutual grief.

Children and the Grieving Process



This information is courtesy of
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The Grieving Process:

First know that children do grieve. Children are able to grieve at a very early age. As soon as they are able to love, they are able to grieve. Grieving is based on the power and importance of a relationship, not the length of the time it existed. Children may not be able to express their grief verbally, but the feelings will come out — perhaps as sadness, loneliness, or in behavior changes.

Age Differences:

A child's ability to understand death and express the grieving process differs at different ages. The inability to explain feelings of grief is a developmental issue, not a grief issue. Being aware of how your children express themselves in other situations will offer insight into how they will express their grief.

Often children's initial concerns are:

- * Did I cause the death?
- * Will this happen to me?
- * Who will take care of me?
- * How will my life be different?



Children and Play:

Children learn to manage and understand their world through play. Because their attention span is limited, they will frequently alternate between needing to ask questions, to talk, and to play. The child who goes off to play during a crisis is doing what is needed to “put things together” and eventually cope. Remember, the mind takes time to determine how best to cope with any situation.



What to Tell a Child:

A child's imagination is more vivid than anything they see as real life. When they see reality and are allowed to talk about it, they can usually cope.

Don't be afraid to tell a child about death. Allow the child to know that it is happening, when and why. A child can cope with almost anything when he/she is included and given permission to express their feelings.

Don't be afraid to include the child in the planning of a loved one's funeral. Allow them to participate in an age-appropriate manner. This could be creating a drawing for the deceased, going to the funeral, or if capable, doing a reading at the funeral.

How to Tell Them:

Be straightforward. Be honest and use simple words, not stories or fairy tales. Statements like “she went to sleep,” or “God needed another angel,” can create fear in children.

Answer what is asked. Children will ask what they need to know when they need to know it. An honest explanation is always best. If you do not tell the truth, children can begin to doubt your honesty. Once that seed of doubt and mistrust is planted, it will be difficult to alter it.

Share Your Feelings:

Remember, tears are OK. Allow children to see your pain. Hiding pain or refusing to express feelings just tells children that they are expected to hide *their* pain and suppress *their* feelings. You may not want your children to hurt, but they will know hurt and pain no matter how hard you try to protect them. Your best gift to them is not to protect them from pain, but to teach them how best to cope and live through the pain.

