



Ask to Come Home. Ask for Caldwell Hospice.



Children and Grief

Grief reactions occur when we lose something we count on, love or care about. It is a physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological response. The death of a loved one is, perhaps, the most devastating loss one may experience.

One of the most challenging jobs for any adult is to assist a child through the event of a death. There is no easy path and no "one way" for a child to grieve. The way you manage your grief will have a tremendous influence on a child's grief response. As in so many situations, you are a role model for your child, so take care of yourself.

How Do I Talk to a Child about Death?

- **Be clear and specific.** Use age-appropriate information to explain what death means. An example: "When people die, it means their body can no longer work. Their heart stops working and they don't breathe anymore."
- **Reassure.** Let children know that a wide range of reactions are acceptable and healthy.
- **Empower with choice.** As much as possible, involve children in decision-making. Ask them about the level of involvement they wish to have in the funeral.
- **Continue discipline.** Gentle reinforcement is necessary. Structure and routine help children feel secure and believe that life can go on.

Warning Signs/Complicating Factors of Grief

- Poor relationship between child and parent
- Mental illness in the family
- Other recent losses
- Relocation or economic hardship after the death
- Unexpected or abrupt death
- Child's unexpressed feelings
- Loss of interest in schoolwork
- Frequent irritability or unexplained crying
- Behavioral changes, such as physically assaultive or cruel behavior to animals or family members

What Helps Children Bounce Back, Following the Loss of a Loved One?

- **Hopefulness.** Expecting that good outcomes are possible.
- **Awareness.** Recognizing needs and emotions without censoring them.
- **Self-acceptance.** Examining personal weaknesses; accepting feedback from others.
- **Assertiveness.** Honoring one's own needs, boundaries, judgments, and values.
- **Congeniality.** Welcoming others as interesting and valuable; developing supportive emotional networks.
- **Active imagination.** Allowing space for new ideas and possibilities.
- **Forgiveness.** Accepting imperfections in themselves and in others.

Ashewood's Grief in Schools

Working with schools, Ashewood provides support and education to students and staff, allowing them to grieve and providing the tools to help manage grief. The program offers:

- Information to help students and teachers support themselves and others who are grieving
- Crisis support for students and staff, as needed
- Individual counseling
- Support groups in conjunction with school staff

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