

TIPS for...

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT LOSS AND GRIEF

Grief is a normal emotion when experiencing the loss of someone or something close to you. Loss, and therefore grief, can occur slowly or suddenly. Children grieve just as adults do, however, children may not have a full understanding of death and loss. Here we offer TiPs on how you can be **REAL** when talking to children about loss and grief.

Reassuring

Reassure children that feelings or grief are big, sometimes overwhelming, and normal.

- Children benefit from feeling like the adults in their life are holding space for their grief while also understanding the importance of routine/schedule.
- Children may have a hard time wrapping their head around the loss and may begin to worry about other family members. Sometimes reassurance can be very helpful in these situations.

Explaining

- Be calm and caring yet also direct. Half-truths do not help children's mourning processes.
- Avoid using euphemisms such as "your friend has gone on a long trip" or "Grandma is sleeping peacefully". This can cause confusion and inadvertently lead to a fear of travelling or sleeping.
- Tell children in an environment that is comfortable and familiar.
- Explaining that someone has died in the context of sadness may help with children's understanding; "I am sad because my friend has died" or "I have some sad news to tell you..."

Activating

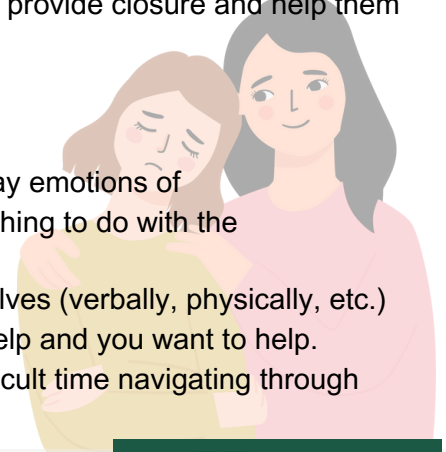
Actively involving children in events such as funerals, memorial services, and other mourning activities can help with their own process.

- Explain to children what the event will look like, what will happen, who will be there, and that there may be people who are sad and are crying.
- Give children the choice to visit their loved one's grave afterward. This may provide closure and help them to deal with the grief.

Listening

All children process loss differently. Some may ask questions, some may display emotions of sadness, confusion, or anxiety, and some may feel guilty - as if they had something to do with the death or with the families' grief.

- It is important to listen to children, how ever they may be expressing themselves (verbally, physically, etc.) and to invite them to ask questions, while expressing that you are there to help and you want to help.
- Be patient, and let children respond as they need. They may be having a difficult time navigating through these new emotions. "Listen" for the clues/signs they give you.



TIPS for...

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT LOSS AND GRIEF

LIBRARY

Navigating Grief Reading List

Ages 4-8

- The Tenth Good Thing About Barney by Judith Viorst
- I'll Always Love You by Hans Wilhelm
- When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death by Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Tolon Brown
- Badger's Parting Gifts by Susan Varley
- Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs by Tomie de Paola
- Trudy's Healing Stone by Trudy Spiller
- The Memory Tree by Britta Teckentrup
- Fluffy and the Stars by T'áncháy Redvers



Ages 9-18

- The Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson
- Missing May by Cynthia Rylant
- Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse
- The Outsiders by S. E. Hinton
- Walk Two Moons by Sharon Creech
- I Will See You Again by Lisa Boivin
- How I Feel: Grief Journal for Kids by Mia Roldan



List retrieved from (Heath et al., 2008)

