

FAMILY WELLNESS

Supporting Children through Times of Grief

- Children and Grief
- Strategies to Support
- Resources



We all experience times of pain and loss. How can we help children work through grief?

The death of a special adult or pet, divorce or separation of parents, a school friend moving, and countless other situations can introduce children to feelings of grief. Their early experiences with grief set the stage for how they will address grief throughout their lives. When adults are able to support children to acknowledge their feelings, find healthy coping strategies, and address their grief, they are setting up protective factors for that child to access for life.

Children may express and process their grief differently than adults. Grief may lead to withdrawal, anger, or even hyperactivity. They

may revert back to behaviors from when they were younger. They may not understand the source of their grief--for example, they may not understand that death is permanent. Children may also no longer want to go to school or be around friends or family members.

Adults can support children through their time of grief by offering opportunities for children to process their loss, by reflecting on and remembering happier times, and by connecting children to valuable resources that can provide further support.



How to Help

Strategies to support children through grief

Lead by Example

"Go first" by modeling for children how to name and acknowledge your own feelings of grief. Share strategies with them that help you address your own grief--sharing memories of the person you are missing, journaling, talking with a therapist or close friend, etc.

Be a Safe Place

Commit to listening to and validating children's feelings of grief. Allow children to share how they are feeling and make an effort not to minimize or explain the feelings away. If you are also in a place of deep grief, try to help your child find another adult who can fill that role.

Create a Memorial

Encourage children to create something meaningful to help remember the person they are missing-- like a collage, a necklace, a video, a song, etc. Allowing children time and space to create something special will help them process their grief and give them a "home base" to connect with their feelings of loss.

Connect children to Resources

Many times children need to process grief with someone other than their parents. Connecting your child to a professional or a support group of peers experiencing similar losses can be very healing. Even reading about characters who have similar experiences can help children process their grief. Check out the links to the right for suggestions.

Provide Consistent Reassurances of Love

Grieving children may feel suddenly insecure or like they are less of a priority in the family as family members work through their own grief. Consistently reminding them that they are loved and cared for by many adults can help them feel secure in the midst of big grief.

**Some things cannot be fixed.
They can only be carried.**

– UNKNOWN

Resources

For continued support

- [Ted E Bear Hollow](#): Grief resources for children ages 3+ and their families
- [Grief's Journey](#): Grief resources for children ages 10+ and their families
- [Grief Therapy](#) for children
- [More suggestions](#) for talking to children about grief
- [Picture books](#) discussing grief and loss for younger children
- [Chapter books](#) discussing grief and loss for older children
- [National Alliance for Children's Grief](#)

