

GRIEF AND LOSS FOR CHILDREN



Children need a lot of love and support from the caring adults in their lives to help them cope with loss. Here are some strategies that might help children process their grief:

- When you talk with children about death, be aware of their age and communication abilities. **Be sensitive** to and respectful of their cultural background.
- Keep in mind that grief is **natural and normal**.
- **Be honest** with children about the tragic experience.
- Allow children the opportunity to **talk openly** about their grief and sadness.
- Encourage children to **ask questions** about death and loss.
- Be aware of your own need to grieve; **share your sadness and grief**.
- Don't assume that children always grieve in an orderly or predictable way. **No two children grieve alike**.
- Let children know that **you really want to understand** what they are feeling or what they need.
- Children often **show their grief** rather than talk about it. For instance, they may show their feelings through their social interactions and play.
- **Give children outlets** to let go of their anger and stress, such as sports, hobbies, physical play, and arts.
- Watch for difficulties such as nightmares, separation anxiety, reversion to outgrown behaviors, withdrawal, and anger. **Set aside some time** to help children explore their feelings and thoughts.
- Following a loss, **choose what a child is exposed to carefully**.
- Grieving is a process. Children will need **long-lasting support**.