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.