



HELPING CHILDREN TO GRIEVE

1. Be aware of yourself and what you are feeling, have some safe ways of expressing your feelings both with children and away from children.
2. Provide ample time and a comfortable physical space to listen.
3. Respect whatever unique ways children express their feelings; know that their expression is likely to be intense, brief, and repeated.
4. Arrange some physical methods for children to express their feelings, especially anger. Examples: clay, paints, old magazines or telephone books for ripping, collage, blocks, etc.
5. Do not overload children with information; answer only the questions they ask. Be patient when they repeatedly ask the same questions.
6. Because death may bring feelings of losing control, offer lots of appropriate choices for decision-making---often.
7. Answer children's questions with simplicity and honesty. "I don't know" is an acceptable answer. Describe death and dying in literal terms.
8. Remember that young children will generalize and associate about important people and emotions. Example: if a sibling died in the hospital, then hospitals are likely to hold certain fears.
9. The basics count all the more. Regular routines, schedules, familiar people and places are best and good food and a warm bed are comforting.
10. Know that a child will grieve cyclically; i.e., at each new developmental level he/she will relive his/her loss as he/she continues to integrate the loss into his/her life at new ages.
11. Observe that a child grieves as part of a family, and the entire normal family structure has shifted. This may mean a change in roles and additional loss to grieve.
12. Above all, respect, encourage, and honor a child's feelings, whether they are fear, grief, sadness, guilt, anger or love. These are natural feelings that help the child process, integrate and heal from the loss.

support. resilience. healing.
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