

Grief Guidelines for Parents of Grieving Children

1. As soon as possible after the death, set time aside to talk to your child.
2. Give your child the facts in a simple manner. You don't have to give them more information than they ask, but don't lie about the cause of death. It will only complicate matters for you and your children later when they do find out.
3. If you can't answer their questions, it's OK to say, "I don't know how to answer that, but perhaps we can find someone to help us."
4. Use the correct language—say the word "dead." Do not use phrases such as: "He's sleeping," or "God took her away," or "He passed away."
5. Explain your feelings to your child, especially if you are crying. Give them permission to cry, too. We are their role models and it's appropriate for children to see our sadness and to share our feelings with them.
6. Use the given name of the deceased when speaking of him or her.
7. Understand the age and level of comprehension of your child. Speak to that level.
8. Talk about feelings such as sad, angry, feeling responsible, scared, tearful, worried, etc.
9. Read a book on childhood grief so that you have a better understanding of what your child may be experiencing.
10. Talk about the viewing and funeral. Explain what happens at these events, and find out if your child wants to attend.
11. Think about ways your child can say "goodbye" to the person who has died.
12. Invite your child to come back to you if he or she has more questions or has heard rumors. Tell your child that you will help get the correct information.
13. Talk about memories—good ones and not so good ones.
14. Watch out for "bad dreams." Are they occurring often? Talk about the dreams.
15. Friends, family, schoolmates, etc. frequently find solace and comfort in doing something in the name of the person who died, i.e., a memorial.
16. You might see some of the following:
 - Tearfulness
 - Irritability
 - Clinginess

- Whiney moods
- Somatic complaints (i.e., stomach aches, headaches)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Grades may dip temporarily
- More pronounced fears about dying themselves, or you dying, or of the dark
- Regression in behavior
- Aggressive behavior

These are normal emotions; however, if you ever feel they are more extreme or lasting longer than you think they should, never hesitate to consult a professional.

17. Offer your child loving, touching support.