

How to Help a Child Deal with Loss

- a) As soon as possible after the death, set time aside to talk to the child.
- b) Give the child the facts in a simple manner "be careful not to go into too much detail. The child will ask more questions as they come up in their mind.
- c) If you can't answer his/her questions, it's OK to say, "I don't know how to answer that, but perhaps we can find someone to help us".
- d) Use the correct language - say the words "dead" and "die". Do not use phrases such as, "He's sleeping..." or "God took her..." or "He went away..."
- e) Ask questions like, "What are you feeling?" "What have you heard from your friends?" "What do you think has happened?" etc.
- f) Explain your feelings to your children, especially if you are crying. Give them permission to cry too. We are their role models: it is good for children to see our sadness and to share our feelings with them.
- g) Use the given name of the deceased when speaking of him or her.
- h) Understand the age and level of comprehension of your child speak to that level.
- i) Talk about feelings, such as angry, sad feeling responsible, scared, tearful, depressed, wishing to die too, etc.
- j) Read a book on death to your child. (Please see your local lending resource library)
- k) Read a book on childhood grief so you have a better understanding of what they may be experiencing.
- l) Talk about the visitation period and funeral. Explain what happens there and find out if your child wants to attend with the rest of your family.
- m) Think about ways that a child can say goodbye to the deceased, such as writing a letter, poem, drawing a picture, etc.
- n) Talk to your child about your religious beliefs, if appropriate, and what happens to people after they die.
- o) Invite your child to come back to you if they have more questions or have heard rumors so that you can help them receive the correct information.
- p) Talk about memories, good ones and ones that may not be so good.
- q) Watch for behavior changes in your child - if they are cause for concern, seek professional help.
- r) Watch out for "bad dreams" - are they occurring often? Talk about the dreams: they are a way to discharge stress.
- s) Friends, family and school mates frequently find solace and comfort in doing something special in the name of the person who has died.
- t) Sudden death, violent death and the death of a young person are especially hard to grieve. Disruption of sleep, appetite, and daily activities may be normal responses to an abnormal or unusual event.