



WISDOM FOR THE CAREGIVER

Grieving (Helping Children Cope)

Remember

- Encourage children to think of ways they can help themselves and others remember their friend (drawing a picture, making a memory book, planting a flower or tree). This contributes to the healing process by allowing them to commemorate the death or other type of loss.
- Start a time of remembering saying, “I remember a funny story about...” Then share the story. Then invite the child to share a special memory of the person who died.
- Encourage the child to put a picture of the person in his or her room. Give the child something that belonged to the person, like a piece of jewelry, a cap, or a dish. When he or she looks at or touches the object, he will feel close to the special person.

It's ok to ask Questions

- A grieving child needs to talk-not just be talked to. Let children know that nothing is too sad or terrible to talk about with a parent or caring adult.
- “Give children many opportunities to ask questions. Answer children’s questions with simple and straightforward answers. Sometimes it is helpful to answer a child’s questions with, “No one knows for sure but I believe...” For some people saying, ‘You know, I wonder about that too,’ is a special kind of honesty that children can understand.” -Michaelene Mundy, *Sad Isn't Bad*

It's Good to Share Your Feelings

- Do not try to distract children or “cheer them up” by suggesting a trip to the circus or buying them toys. When children are upset, it’s more helpful to say, “I can see you are worried,” or “I know that what we are talking about is very scary,” rather than “You’ll feel better soon.”
- Children may show their grief in different ways. Stress that we all have our own special way of showing our feelings, and there is no one “right” way to behave.

It's Good to Participate in the Activities Following a Death

- Mental Health experts agree that it can be a good experience to go to a funeral as a way of saying goodbye. However, children should never be pressured into attending if they do not want to go. And if they do attend, they should be prepared for what will happen.

Books and other Resources

- Bahr, Mary. *If Nathan Were Here* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2000). A warm, sensitive story of how one little boy is encouraged and supported to find his own way to remember his best friend.
- Bauer, Marion Dane. *On My Honor* (New York: Bantam Doubleday, 1986). A powerful novel about death and love and a boy’s struggle with conscience. Ages 9-12.
- Buscaglia, Leo. *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf* (Thorofare, NJ: Slack Inc., 1982). An inspiring allegory illustrating the delicate balance between life and death, emphasizing the fact that death is a part of life. This is a story for all ages.
- Cohn, Janice, D.S.W. *I had a friend named Peter: Talking to Children about the Death of a Friend* (New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1987). Betsy’s parents help her cope when she learns of the sudden death of her friend Peter. In the introduction the author discusses guidelines for parents and teachers talking to children about death.
- dePaola, Tomie. *Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs* (New York: Puffin Books, 1973). This story about how a child struggles to express his feelings about a beloved grandfather’s death offers comfort to children facing the death of a loved one.

Books and other Resources, Continued

- Mundy, Michaelene. *Sad Isn't Bad; A Good-Grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing with Loss* (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Abby Press, 1998). A friendly and loving guide to help children cope with loss; offers children of all ages (and the people who love and care for them) a comforting, realistic look at loss. Loaded with positive, life-affirming helps.
- Paterson, Katherine. *Bridge to Terabithia* (New York: Harper Trophy, 1977). This interesting and compelling story for children and adults illustrates the emotional responses that are part of the grief process. This story could be read together as a family.
- Rasberry, Salli and Carole Rae Watanabe. *Art of Dying: Honoring and Celebrating Life's Passages* (Berkeley: Celestial Arts, 2001). This practical handbook tells about handcrafted celebrations of life, funerals, and memorials created by friends and family to honor their loved one's passing. Encourages readers to embrace death with openness as well as to develop a greater passion for life. An excellent resource for families.
- Viorst, Judith. *The Tenth Good Thing about Barney* (New York: Aladdin Brooks, 1971). This story is about a little boy whose cat, Barney, died, and how he and his family worked through the grief process.

For Teens

- Dower, Laura. *I Will Remember You* (New York: Scholastic Inc. 2001). Each chapter helps teens explore a different aspect of grief. Includes personal stories of death and life from teens, advice from a grief counselor, and dozens of creative exercises to help teens through pain and sorry.
- Grollman, Earl. *Straight talk About Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone you love* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1993). A book that helps teens who have lost a friend or relative know what to expect and how to deal with their emotions and experiences.
- Grootman, Marilyn E. *When a Friend Dies: A Book for Teens About Grieving and Healing* (Free Spirit Publishing, 1994). A grief guide that provides practical advice from teens whose friends have died. Recommended for grieving teen and for their parents and education.
- Kremetz, Jill. *How It Feels When a Parent Dies* (New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc. 1981). This book contains eighteen short stories about death and grief. For ages 7-16.