



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 by saying, “I remember a funny story about...” then share the story. Invite the child to share a special memory of the person who died.

Encourage the child to put a picture of the person in their room. Give the child something that belonged to the person, like a piece of jewelry, a cap, or a dish. This will help the child 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 FEELINGS

Do not try to distract children or “cheer them up” by suggesting a trip to the movies 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.

EVENTS 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.

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WOUNDED

CARE WELL.

