

Helping your Child through Grief

A Parent's Guide

A lot of the tools needed you will already use automatically when interacting with your child daily without realising.

1. Be there for them - They need support which is flexible and may continue for some time. There is no time scale on grief. For children their grief comes and goes (like jumping in and out of puddles, or waves hitting the beach). The lack of constancy does not mean that grief has gone away, it's how they are processing that grief. They only can hold the situation for a small amount of time and this helps them from getting overwhelmed. They then will revisit their grief when they have built more capacity.
2. Continue to Listen- They may need to tell their stories repeatedly. Listening without judgement or interruption can be a very important gift you can give
3. Sitting with Silence - Sometimes there are no words that help comfort from the pain. Physical contact (hugs, holding hands etc.) can sometimes say what words cannot. Also taking time to sit with them while they play or draw etc. will give reassurance and a sense of security
4. Space to Express of Feelings- Reassure your child that many feelings make up grief and it's OK to cry, be sad or feel angry. Encourage them to talk about how they feel.
5. When possible initiate and anticipate- They often don't know, or can't ask for what they need, so watch out for changes in behaviour and perhaps offer special times when they can have 1-1 time with you
6. Importance of Remembering- Fond memories help the healing. Give your child the opportunity to share memories and remember special anniversaries
7. Help the Child Find Support and Encouragement..... If they want, help the bereaved child find a variety of support. Beware of isolation at play/lunch times when they go back to school.
8. We all grieve at our own pace, give them time to grieve at their pace – Grief is an individual journey don't have a time scale.
9. Its ok to laugh and have fun times- Grief is exhausting – like running in a swamp. Talk to your child about how it's OK to laugh and have fun.
10. Allow your child to make choices - When their world feels us of control children like have some choice about what could be most helpful for them.
11. Believe in your child's ability to recover and grow in their resilience- This may be the first time they have experienced difficulties so faith in their ability to recover will be needed especially if they're a bit shaky. Your trust in their ability to heal is essential and helps to grow their resilience to bounce back in the future when they experience difficulties.

Parents remember to be kind to yourself – You are doing a great job in a difficult situation! Acknowledge your successes, and don't focus on mistakes, and take one day at a time. Looking after yourself will allow you to have more ability to support your child.