

Supporting Your Child Through Loss

A Step-by-Step Guide

Grief is a journey and children need love, patience, and understanding as they try to understand the loss. Some children may struggle more than others. By being present, honest, and supportive, you can help children heal while keeping their loved one's memory alive. If you notice signs of deep distress, don't hesitate to seek professional support.

1

Be Honest and Use Clear Language

What to say:

"I have some very sad news. Grandpa died today. That means his body stopped working, and we won't be able to see him anymore."

Tips:

- Avoid phrases like **"gone to sleep"** or **"passed away"** as they can be confusing.
- Use simple, age-appropriate language.



2

Validate The Child's Feelings

What to say:

"It's okay to feel sad, angry, or confused. I feel sad too. You can talk to me about anything you're feeling."

Tips:

- Let children know all feelings are okay.
- Reassure them that everyone experiences grief in different ways.



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Answer Questions Honestly

What to say:

"Do you have any questions about what happened? I will do my best to answer them."

Tips:

- Be prepared for repeated questions as children process the loss.
- If you don't know the answer, say, "That's a great question. I don't know how to explain it, but we can think about it together."



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Provide Comfort and Reassurance

What to say:

"I am here for you. You are safe, and we will go through this together."

Tips:

- Give extra hugs, cuddles, and physical comfort if a child wants it.
- Maintain routines to create a sense of stability.



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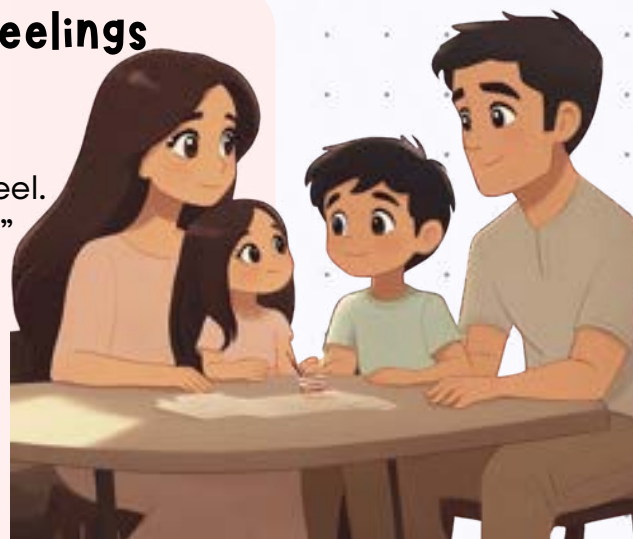
Encourage Expression of Feelings

What to say:

"You can talk, draw, or write about how you feel. If you don't feel like talking, that's okay too."

Tips:

- Offer different outlets for expression like storytelling or art.
- Respect a child's need for space but check in regularly.



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Involve Children in Saying Goodbye

What to say:

“Would you like to draw a picture for Grandma, light a candle, or share a memory about her?”

Tips:

- Let children participate in funerals or memorials in a way that feels comfortable.
- Offer creative ways to remember their loved ones
- There is no absolute age when a child is old enough to attend a funeral or memorial service. Give children a choice of whether to attend if possible. Make sure they have someone to support them if they are upset.

7

Watch for Signs Children Need Extra Support

What to say:

“I notice you’ve been very quiet. Would you like to talk to someone about your feelings?”

Tips:

- Look for changes in behavior, sleep, or school performance.
- If *your* grief feels overwhelming, consider a counselor or support group.



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Keep the Memory Alive

What to say:

“We can always remember Dad by looking at pictures, telling stories, or doing things he loved.”

Tips:

- Normalize talking about the person who died.
- Help children create a memory box, scrapbook, or tradition in honor of their loved one.



Signs That a Child May Be Struggling with Grief



PERSISTENT SADNESS THAT DOESN'T IMPROVE OVER TIME.



WITHDRAWN BEHAVIOR AND LACK OF INTEREST IN USUAL ACTIVITIES.



CHANGES IN SLEEP (TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE).



INCREASED ANXIETY ABOUT DEATH, SEPARATION, OR SAFETY.



FREQUENT ANGER OR EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS.



PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS (STOMACHACHES, HEADACHES) WITH NO MEDICAL CAUSE.



TROUBLE CONCENTRATING IN SCHOOL OR A SUDDEN DROP IN GRADES.

If these signs persist, consider reaching out to a grief counselor, therapist, or support group to help your child process their emotions in a healthy way.