



GOOD GRIEF ADVOCACY

Greetings from Good Grief!

Children learn, grow, and develop the capacity to cope with stress and stressful conditions within a network of relationships. Many grieving children lose stable, responsive relationships and are in need of you and other adults in their broader community to provide this network of support. We hope you find the resources below helpful in your role as you support grieving children in our community.

SUPPORTING PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

Research shows that following a death, each member of the family exhibits a unique response. This causes family dynamics to shift, most commonly resulting in a breakdown of communication. Research also shows that the parent-child relationship is the most important factor to determine a child's resilience. Dependable and responsive parent-child interaction promotes healthy brain development and buffers risk factors associated with early childhood loss.



WHAT GRIEVING PARENTS NEED

1) Practical support with day to day responsibilities

Raising children is tough work. Add a death to the mix and it becomes exponentially more challenging. Practical support with day to day responsibilities can go a long way for grieving parents. Here are common needs that newly bereaved parents have:

- Funeral planning
- Financial advice
- Running errands
- Making sure the kid's needs are being met
- Healthy meals

2) Emotional support from family, friends, and other adults

This largely means listening and showing up, even long after the death has happened. If you know a grieving parent, make sure they are getting the support they need over the long haul.

3) Encouragement and guidance

As a general rule, it is best not to give advice unless it is solicited. So, start by offering your condolences, and practical support. Don't get too caught up in the perfect thing to say. Authentic interactions and empathy are most important. After listening, then you can offer up some of the additional tips below if appropriate.

TIPS YOU CAN SHARE WITH PARENTS



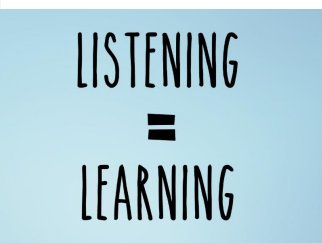
1) Honest Communication

Honesty, openness, and answering questions about the death is important to support a child's processing and integration of the loss. Encourage parents to regularly check in with their child, model, and share their own grief in healthy ways.



2) Give the Child Choices

Encourage parents to allow their child to make choices. Children appreciate this, and they do not like being left out. For example, if a parent is questioning whether to include their child in the funeral, encourage them to do so and give the child options on their level of involvement. Choices allow the child to take ownership of their grief following a death.



3) Listen Without Judgment

Allow the child to express all the emotions of grief without fear of judgment. You can let parents know that their children will go through a variety of thoughts and emotions, and the best thing they can do is to validate all the ups and downs.



4) Keep Stable Routines

All children need consistency and structure. This is especially true for a grieving child (and teenager) whose world can feel chaotic and out of control. Stability in routines, who they interact with, bedtimes, and healthy daily practices will help to bring back a sense of control.



5) Have Patience

Lots of parents worry about their children's behavior. With grief it is easy to start over-thinking and second-guessing things and start worrying that they are going to suffer a traumatic experience. Encourage parents to remember that this is a lifelong process, so have patience.