
10 Things Grieving Children Want You to Know

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1. Children want to be told the truth about the death:

- Tell them in age-appropriate and direct language
- Ask them if they have any questions and clear up misconceptions

2. Children look to you as a role model for how people grieve:

- Share your feelings with them as long as they are relieved of the task of having to “fix it”
- Each child will grieve in their own unique way
- They will grieve alone in an effort to shield you from their pain

3. Children want to talk about their person who died:

- They need you to tolerate listening when they tell their story or share their feelings
- They fear that they will forget their loved one

4. Children express their emotions through play and behaviors which may be problematic for you:

- They can't always tolerate intense emotions or know how to talk about them
- They might make decisions you don't agree with
- They need to take breaks from their grief and engage in age appropriate activities.

5. Children need to know who would take care of them if you could not:

- They may fear for your safety especially when you are apart

6. Children benefit from being included in mourning rituals:

- Your child needs the opportunity to participate in ongoing rituals
- Rituals aid in their understanding of death

7. They need you to help them feel safe:

- Provide clear and consistent boundaries, limits and expectations
- Give them room to safely interact with peers and adults outside of the family

8. They need to be taught coping strategies:

- Include ways to comfort themselves in your absence

9. Children need to be included when making decisions:

- About how to celebrate holidays, birthdays and anniversaries
- About other family circumstances such as moving or changing schools.

10. Children need you to take care of yourself: they will only adapt as well as you do.

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