



Tides™



A Support Program for
Grieving Children, Teens, and
The People Who Love Them.

ways to help grieving children

- Listen. Children may want to share their story. This is a healing experience. Do not give advice or make judgments. Reflect back to what the child says, using the child's words. Children must feel that their physical and emotional needs are going to be met before s/he can give into grieving. (If I talk, will someone listen? If I cry, will someone hold me?)
- Listen some more. Sometimes children don't want to talk, can't find the words, or try to protect adults around them from more pain, so they choose to be silent. When you listen, pay attention to the non-verbal cues.
- Be honest with the child. It is difficult to talk to children about painful things because we want to protect them. It is important to be honest which brings trust and opens communication.
- Answer their questions, even the hard ones. It is important for children to know that they can ask questions. Answer questions truthfully, being sensitive to their age. It is acceptable to say, "I don't know."
- Give the child choices. This helps them regain control they feel they may have lost.
- Encourage consistency and routine.
- Talk about and remember the person who died. Bringing up the name of the person who died gives children permission to share their feelings about the person. It shows them it is not "taboo" to talk about the deceased. Sharing a memory shows the child that the person who died will continue to live on within them and impact those left behind.
- Expect and allow all kinds of emotions (both positive and negative).
- Respect differences in grieving styles.
- Provide hands-on activities such as drawing, journaling, painting, sculpting clay, collages, memory boxes
- Exercise and physical play help children release energy and emotion
- Be a model for your children. Children watch adults to get cues about how to grieve. It is important for children to know it is okay to cry, be angry, and to grieve.
- Hug with permission
- Practice patience
- Respect grieving children even when they are in a bad mood
- Be aware some kids will show regressive behaviors, others will become little adults
- Eat right and drink water
- Help the child at bedtime. Consistent bedtime rituals such as story, song, prayer, etc.
- Don't force children to talk. They will talk when they are ready.
- Take a break. When possible, plan fun activities for your children that will allow them to laugh, play, and be kids.
- Playing is grieving.

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