

# Ways to Support Grieving Children



## BE OPEN AND HONEST

While it can be difficult to talk to children about painful things, it's important to be honest and open with them. By being truthful, we build trust and create a safe space for communication. Encourage them to ask questions, even the tough ones. Answer their questions honestly, tailoring your answers to their age and understanding. If you don't know the answer, it's okay to say so.

Grief can affect children in different ways. Some children might express their sadness openly, while others might seem to be doing fine but are really feeling sad inside. It's important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Children may experience a mix of feelings, including sadness, anger, guilt, confusion and even relief. They might cry, become withdrawn or act out. It's okay for them to feel these emotions. We should create a safe space for them to express themselves without judgment. By understanding and respecting their unique grieving styles and practicing patience, we can help children feel supported and loved during this difficult time.

## LISTEN ACTIVELY

To help children cope with loss, create a safe space where they feel comfortable expressing their emotions. Listen attentively to their words, without judgment or offering immediate solutions. Validate their feelings, assuring them it's normal to feel sad, angry or confused. Reflect their words to show understanding, such as, "It sounds like you're feeling really sad about losing [loved one's name]."

Prioritize their physical and emotional needs. Ensure they feel secure and supported. Sometimes, silence speaks volumes. Pay attention to nonverbal cues and respect their pace. When they're ready, they'll share their story.

## ENCOURAGE EXPRESSION

To support grieving children, provide outlets for emotional expression such as drawing, writing or talking to a trusted adult. Encourage activities that celebrate the life of the loved one, like creating memory boxes or sharing stories. While it's important to acknowledge grief, it's equally crucial to balance emotional processing with joyful experiences. Plan fun activities that allow children to laugh, play and simply be kids. Remember, play is a form of healing. Openly discuss the person who died, sharing positive memories and stories. This helps children feel connected to their loved ones and normalizes grief.

To empower children during this difficult time, give them choices whenever possible. This helps them regain a sense of control. Encourage physical activity, such as exercise or playtime, as it can help release energy and emotions. And, of course, offer hugs and physical comfort, but always with permission.



## MAINTAIN ROUTINES

Maintaining routines is crucial for grieving children as it provides stability and predictability during a chaotic time. Consistent schedules, familiar activities, and visual reminders can help children feel safe and focused, reducing anxiety and promoting emotional regulation. While flexibility is key, sticking to routines can be a powerful tool in helping children cope with loss and move forward.

## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, TOO

Remember that you can't help others if you're not taking care of yourself. Seek support from friends, family, or a therapist to process your own grief. Eat healthy foods, drink enough water, move your body and do things that bring you joy.

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.



Support For Every Wave of Grief