

How to Help a Grieving Child



- Let the child know you are willing to talk with them about their loved one who has died. Allow the child to take the lead.
- Most children don't want you to fix what hurts. (Thank Goodness, because death can't be fixed.) They just need you to listen.
- Encourage the child to share stories and memories of their loved one. Ask questions.
- Allow the child to express thoughts and feelings related to the death of their loved one – what ever these may be!
- **Listen**
- Affirm the child's feelings by letting them know you "get it!" Tell them their feelings make sense when someone we love dies.
- Take time to play with them. Children will move in and out of their grief. In between times they just want to be children. Let the child know it's all right to be happy.
- **Listen**
- Use the given name of the person who has died. If possible, share your own memories of their loved one.
- Talk honestly with the child about the death.
- **Listen**
- Invite the child to be a part of the family grief process. Children are never too young to grieve and share in the family experience of the loss.
- It is not an adult's responsibility to protect a child from the feelings of grief. It is, however, gravely important for a loving adult to be fully present for that child in the midst of those difficult feelings.
- **That's Right, Listen!**
- Honor the unique timetable and expression of each child's grief. Just as each of our relationships is unique and special, so too is the expression of grief resulting from the death of a loved one.
- Remember that grief is revisited throughout the lifespan of a child. Continue to support the child when grief resurfaces, even after a long period of time.

