

How to Support a Grieving Child Returning to School



The children have returned to school. For some, it is the first time back in the school setting since the death of their loved one. For almost all, there will be new teachers, classmates, classrooms, and school schedules. Change often brings anxiety, especially for those children who have experienced the death of a parent or sibling. They may be wondering how they will handle the questions about their deceased parent or their sibling, or whether or not they even want their teachers and friends to know about the death.

To help bereaved children, ask them what they are happily anticipating or fearfully dreading about the new school year. By talking about their concerns, you may find ways to help them transition back into the school routine. Also, help the children create a plan with their teachers so that they may feel supported at school. Here are some things parents at Bo's Place have discussed with their children's teachers:

- If your child would like to tell the class about the death, ask the teacher to help tell the class, or make suggestions for what your child's teacher could say.
- Make a "Safety Plan" ahead of time designating what your child can do if and when he or she gets upset during the school day. Some examples of Safety Plans are:
 - Going to the library, nurse's office, or to the principal or counselor.
 - Staying in the classroom, but doing something different like writing in a journal.
 - Going to the office to call someone at home or at work.
- Encourage your child to ask for help if he or she has problems keeping up with his or her work.
- Ask your child's teacher, if needed, to cut back on homework for a while.
- Ask if your child can sit by a supportive friend.
- Can you think of other things you can talk to the teacher about? Ask your group members what has been helpful for their children in the school setting.

