

Suggestions - for Parents



Some Suggestions for Parents:

- As soon as possible, set time aside to talk to your child. Once again, it is best that information come from you and that it be factual, simple and honest, using the correct language, for example, "He has died" or, "She was killed."
- Ask if your child is hearing new words that need to be explained.
- Ask questions. "What are you feeling?" "What have you heard from your friends?" "What do you think happened?"
- Don't hesitate to refer to the deceased by his or her name. The person may be dead, but he or she is a person to be remembered and loved, not spoken of only in hushed pronouns.
- Read a book on a child's response to death, such as: *The Grieving Child* or *The Grieving Teen*, both by Helen Fitzgerald.
- Talk about the funeral or memorial service. Explain what happens and find out if your child wants to attend.
- Think about ways your child can say goodbye to the deceased. This might be by attending the funeral or presenting flowers to the family, or by writing a note to the deceased that could be buried with the body.
- Depending on your religious views, you may want to talk to your child about your belief in life after death. But be careful not to say things like, "It was God's will." Statements like this raise more questions than they answer.
- Invite your child to come back to you if he or she has more questions or has heard disturbing rumors. Give assurance that you will answer any question to which you know the answer or find the correct information when you don't.
- Talk about memories - good ones and ones not-so-good ones.
- Watch out for bad dreams. Are they occurring often? Talking about them is a way to discharge stress.
- Watch for behavioral changes in your child. They are often symptoms of internal stress.
- Friends, family, and schoolmates often find comfort in doing something in the name of the person who died, such as providing for a memorial of some kind.
- Sudden death, violent death, or death of a young person is especially hard to mourn. Disruption of sleep, appetite and daily activities are normal responses.
- If you find your child is developing problems that you don't know how to handle, don't hesitate to seek professional help.