

## HOW CAN I...

# Help my child with difficult experiences such as death and grief?

### Advice for Parents and Caregivers

- **Grieving while parenting a child who has also lost a loved one is a deeply demanding journey.** Remember, prioritizing your own well-being isn't a luxury, it's the fuel that allows you to support your child. Seek comfort within your community of friends and family. Even small acts of self-care — like a quiet walk — can make a meaningful difference. By tending to your own needs, you model emotional resilience for your child and create a safe space for you both to heal.
- **Focus on listening, not fixing. Instead of worrying about what to say, take the time to listen to your child's words and emotions.** Validate their feelings, even if they're complex or confusing. Be their safe space for sharing everyday experiences and memories of the person they lost. Offer support without pressure and let them guide the conversation. This kind of mindful listening, across all ages, builds trust and allows your child to navigate grief in their own way.
- **Let your child talk about the person they lost, how they remember them, and how they want to keep their memory alive.** Shared stories, treasured keepsakes, and special ceremonies become bridges to healing. Acknowledge their loss at holidays and birthdays, showing them love endures even through grief.
- **Learn to embrace the “new normal” by showing your child that even amidst sadness, joy can thrive.** Doing simple shared activities like baking cookies or playing games can create moments of connection, reminding them that even though things have changed, your family's love remains a constant.
- **Kids need routines and responsibilities even after a loss.** Going to school, keeping a schedule, and setting clear expectations help them feel secure and involved in supporting the family.



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video on this topic.

## 7 Tips for Helping Kids Deal with Death and Grief

1. **Be the one to tell them.** Deliver the news in a comfortable private space like your home. It's okay if you or the person speaking with your child are sad or crying, but if you are too overwhelmed then another trusted adult can do it instead.
2. **Be direct.** Kids can be very literal, so vague phrases like "passed away" or "in a better place" can be confusing. Be direct with your child, stay calm and compassionate, and say outright that the person or pet has died.
3. **Be ready for questions.** Some kids may need time to digest the news, but many children will have immediate questions. Answer them honestly with brief, age-appropriate explanations. Follow their lead rather than overwhelming them with information they may not be ready for.
4. **Let the feelings flow.** Showing your own feelings will model for your child that it's okay to express their emotions. Let them know that it's okay to be sad and that they may experience a multitude of feelings, and that there's no wrong or right way to grieve.
5. **Offer reassurance.** Your child may worry that other people or pets they love will die soon too, so offer reassurance that everyone is safe.
6. **Share memories together.** Whether your child has lost a loved one or a beloved pet, normalize talking about them and looking at pictures so they know it's not a taboo topic but rather an important part of the healing process.
7. **Create a support network.** If your child is having a hard time, don't be afraid to alert teachers, the school counselor, or other adults who care for them. This will let them know that your child might need some extra support and monitoring. Everyone can look for signs of anxiety or depression such as trouble sleeping or eating, increased irritability, separation anxiety, and/or loss of interest in preferred activities.

To learn more, check out these helpful resources:

[Helping Children Cope With Grief](#)

The Child Mind Institute

[Addressing Grief: Brief Facts and Tips](#)

National Association of School Psychologists

[Bereaved Parenting](#)

Arizona State University

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The Child Mind Institute is dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders by giving them the help they need to thrive. We've become the leading independent nonprofit in children's mental health by providing gold-standard care, delivering educational resources to millions of families each year, training educators in underserved communities, and developing tomorrow's breakthrough treatments.