

Helping Children Deal with Grief

Information courtesy of Kids Path Counseling Services

- It is critical that we offer our children chances to communicate their feelings about what they see/hear that is disturbing. Validating their feelings is essential to keeping communication flowing. Being respectful of the child's feelings and paying attention to non-verbal clues is very important.
- It may be necessary to clear up any misinformation the child may have concerning situation. Try not to overwhelm the child with too many details, though.
- If the child is afraid, reassure him/her as best you can. Talk about ways to feel safe at home. **ALWAYS REASSURE YOUR CHILD OF YOUR LOVE.**
- Make sure the child knows that tears are appropriate when we are sad.
- Share your own coping skills with your child. Talk about what you do to care for yourself when you feel afraid or sad.
- Attentive listening to your child is a critical part of good parenting, especially when your child is disturbed by a tragedy.
- Remember that children may show a wide range of feelings as expressions of grief.
- Sometimes, children react by being mad, when they are really sad or afraid.
- Children may lash out at someone they love because of feelings of insecurity and confusion. Often this person who receives their anger is the person with whom the child feels safe enough to express difficult feelings.
- Children may grieve in spurts, crying one moment, laughing the next. Children have no way of knowing what is appropriate behavior.
- The best way for adults to deal with children is with honesty and by using simple, easily understood answers.
- It is okay to tell children, "I don't have an answer; there is no good explanation," or "No, it isn't fair this happened," or "I worry about that too."