

# BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

## Children & Grief

Grieving children want to be told the truth.

- Questions should be answered with honesty. *“Honest answers build trust, help provide understanding and allow children to feel comfortable approaching adults with questions because they know they can trust us to tell them the truth”.*
- Consider the age of the child and the maturity level of the child when answering questions surrounding the death (don't overwhelm with too much information).

Grieving children want to be reassured that there will always be someone to take care of them.

- Grieving children spend a lot of time worrying about another person in their life who might die.
- Children may feel insecure and cling to their surviving parent.
- Hug, touch, cuddle especially for really young children – reassure them that you will be there to support them.

Grieving children want you to know that their grief is long lasting.

- Children will grieve the person who died for the rest of their life.
- Grieving kids don't “just get over it”.
- Their grief changes over time as they grow and change over time.

Children often manage their grief and loss through play.

- Typically, they cannot sustain prolonged grief and they use play to take a break from the grief.

Grieving children want you to know that they will always miss the person who died.

- People die, but love doesn't die.
- Grieving children will miss the person who died for as long as they live.

Often, grieving children want to share their story and talk about the person who died.

- Having an opportunity to tell their story and share memories about the person who died is beneficial to a child's bereavement.
- Grieving children don't want to forget the person who died – they are also worried that others will forget their person.

Every child is unique and will grieve differently.

- Some children might be more expressive with their grief.
- Some children might keep it all in.

Siblings grieve differently.

- Just because children come from the same family doesn't mean that their grief will be the same.
- It is important to honour each child's story, even if it is different than their sibling's story.

*“Even though I might be acting out, what I'm really feeling is intense emotions of grief”.*

- Grieving children frequently feel sad, angry, confused, or scared.
- Since they might not know how to express all of these emotions, they often end up acting out instead.

If you're not sure what a grieving child wants just ask them!

- When in doubt, ask a grieving child how you can support them.
- Check in with the child – do they want to talk about the person who died? Maybe not.
- Expect myriad answers.
- Do they want to write about their grief or do some other activity to express their grief?
- What do they need?

You can help grieving children by:

- Including them in funeral arrangements and planning.
- Following their lead.
- Validating their feelings. Give permission for inclusive feelings (anger, love)
- Answering their questions honestly.
- Seeking out additional resources, as needed.

*“Death does not end  
our story...  
Death does not end  
our relationships”*



### Contact:

Kids Help Line

1800 55 1800

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

Parent Help Line

1300 1300 52

<http://www.parentline.org.au>

Children's Grief Hotline

1300 654 556

National Centre for  
Childhood Grief

<http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au/counselling-programs>

*“When Families Grieve” –  
Sesame Street DVD is  
available from  
Bereavement Support or  
visit:*

<http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/grief>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2VpflpbOmk>

*“Life is  
changed not  
ended”*