

Including Children in the Grief Process

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Newly bereaved families are faced with many challenging questions and sometimes the need to make difficult decisions. At Supporting Kidds, we very often receive calls and visits from families that are unsure of how to share information with their children when a death has occurred and whether or not it is okay to include children in funeral or memorial services.

Through consultation, therapy, and support group services, we aid families in understanding that grief is a universal experience that impacts all people, including children. We support families in finding ways to better help their children in understanding and coping with bereavement and the challenges of grief.

Consider these basic tips when preparing to share information with children about loss, death, and grief:

- *Offer children simple, yet honest and accurate, information about the death.*
 - Provide a direct explanation of what death means and what caused the death: “When a person dies, it means the body has completely stopped working. A person who has died will never be alive again. A person dies because something physical made the body stop working.”
 - Avoid using euphemisms, such as “passed away,” “lost,” or “gone to a better place,” as these abstract terms can be confusing and frightening for young children.
 - Remember to move at your child’s pace—check in with your child in order to find out what information he or she really wants to know.
- *Provide children with information about the funeral or memorial service.*
 - Explain what the child will see and hear at the services
 - Explain what will happen to the body before and after the services
 - Offer children choices about whether or not they would like to attend or participate in the services. Make necessary accommodations for children attendees who may need to “take a break” at various points throughout the services.

- *Remember that death is a complicated concept that takes considerable time to understand.* Allow time for questions and additional explanations as children process this experience over time.

For additional information about including children in the grief process, check out this great article from the New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/20/garden/letting-children-share-in-grief.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Supporting Kidds is always happy to help support families in preparing to share information with children about death and grief. Please feel free to contact us to request a copy of our Family Survival Kit or to schedule a consultation: call 302-235-5544 or email us at support@supportingkidds.org