

Guidelines for Parents to Help Children Through Grief

- As soon as possible after the death, set time aside to talk to your child.
- Give your child the facts in a simple manner – be careful not to go into too much detail. You child will ask more questions as they come up.
- If you can't answer their questions, it's OK to say, "I don't know how to answer that, but perhaps we can find someone to help us."
- Use the correct language – say the word "dead." Do not use phrases such as: "He's sleeping," or "God took her" etc.
- Ask your child questions to better understand what he/she may be thinking or feeling. "What are you feeling?" "What have you heard from your friends?" "What do you think happened?" etc.
- Explain your feelings to your child, especially if you are crying. Give them permission to cry. We are their role models and it's appropriate for children to see our sadness and to share our feelings with them.
- Use the given name of the deceased when speaking of him or her.
- Understand the age and level of comprehension of your child. Speak to that level.
- Talk about feelings, such as: sad, angry, feeling responsible, scared, tearful, depressed, worried, etc.
- Read a book on childhood grief so you have a better understanding of what your child may be experiencing.
- Read a book on death to your child. Take time to discuss what you have read and tie it into what is happening to you.