

For Parents -- Possible Ways that Children May Respond to Grief

- **Shock** -- Disbelief that the person died. Do not force the child to accept the reality of the death: ordinarily this will pass and the child will accept the reality when he/she is psychologically ready.
- **Regression** – A child may revert to baby talk, bed wetting, fear of separation from the parent, desire to have things done for them which they ordinarily did for themselves, etc.
- **Poor academic performance**
- **Withdrawal** from family, friends, or the things that they used to enjoy.
- **Difficulty relating to peers**, often resorting to aggressive behavior.
- **Change in sleep and eating patterns** – either too much or too little.
- **Anger and Anxiety**
- **Headaches and Stomach pain**
- **Tightness in throat and shortness of breath**

Ways that Parents Can Help a Grieving Child

- Be a Listener. Allow children to express their thoughts and concerns. Answer questions when you can – if you can't, simply tell the child that you do not know the answer to all of his/her questions.
- All children to feel their feelings. Do not attempt to tell children how they should or shouldn't feel. They know what they are feeling inside. Sometimes adults are uncomfortable with the pain their children are experiencing and try to take the pain away.
- Allow children to cry. Do not be afraid to express your own emotions in an appropriate and calm manner.
- Assure the child that he/she did not contribute to the death. Sometimes children feel that their thoughts or actions were the cause of someone's death. Assure them that being angry with or not liking a person does not contribute to a person's death.
- Share any religious beliefs you may have in regard to death.
- Use correct language. "Death" and "died" should be used rather than terms such as "sleeping" or "passing." Children may misinterpret the latter, for example, and fear that if they go to sleep they will die.
- Assure children that most people live to an old age.