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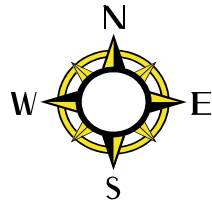
## Suggested Resources

Hospice has several publications on how to help children when a loved one is dying or has died. This series is called Navigating Your Grief. It

Includes:

- Answering Children's Questions about Dying and Grief
- How to Help Children When Someone Special is Dying
- Preparing Children to Attend Calling Hours and Funerals
- Resources for Grieving Children
- Sharing Sad News with Children
- Ten Facts Everyone Should Know about Grieving Children

The material for the *Navigating Your Grief Series* came from Hospice and Palliative Care of St. Lawrence Valley and has been edited and reprinted with their permission.



## Compass Points

High Peaks Hospice: Essex County  
P.O. Box 192  
Port Henry, NY 12974  
518-942-6513  
800-639-8045

High Peaks Hospice: Tri-Lakes  
19 Church Street  
Saranac Lake, NY 12983  
518-891-0606  
877-324-1686

High Peaks Hospice: Warren County  
79 Glenwood Ave., 2nd Floor  
Queensbury, NY 12804  
518-743-1672  
800-730-9477

# How to Help Children When Someone Special Is Dying

Compass Points:  
Navigating Your  
Grief Series



High Peaks Hospice & Palliative Care, Inc.

Essex County  
800-639-8045

Tri-Lakes  
877-324-1686

Warren County  
800-730-9477

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## When Someone Special is Dying

Everyday adults struggle with the challenges of caring for a loved one who is dying.

It is natural to want to protect children from the pain of this experience. However, allowing children to participate in this family experience can be a positive and invaluable life opportunity.

Children are well aware that “something is up” when the adults in their life shift focus from everyday life to a stressful caregiving situation.

Children learn how to respond and cope with this experience by watching how the adults in their life respond.

Protecting children from the experiences of death and dying does not provide the comfort adults want for children. In fact, failing to discuss these experiences can generate fears, anxieties, and confusion. It can lead a child to draw his or her own often scary conclusions about what is happening to a loved one.

### The Keys to Supporting Children

- Remember that children are flexible.
- The child’s age will determine how much they understand about what is happening. As they grow up they will understand more and will ask more questions about how their loved one died.
- Keep the information simple. Give the same story each time they ask, stick to the facts and, most importantly, explain the dying process in simple language.
- Encourage children to ask questions, listen to their needs and let them know it’s okay to cry and feel sad. These are positive and healthy coping skills to teach children.

### Way to Include Children in the Caregiving Process:

Take the time to include children in caring for a dying loved one. Try these suggestions or try others.

- Bring the loved one a cup of water or a magazine.
- Draw a picture for the loved one.
- Read a book together.

### And remember to:

- Help children understand that when someone is dying they may be grouchy or not feel like talking. Tell children this is okay and that it has nothing to do with them.
- Encourage a grieving child to use healthy coping tools.

### Suggested Coping Tools for Children:

#### Encourage Children to cope by:

- Talking about scary feelings.
  - Writing or drawing about how they feel.
  - Creating friendship bracelets out of yarn or string for the loved one and child.
  - Playing with friends or watching funny movies.
  - Using a shoe box to create a memory box and filling it with pictures and other small memory items.
  - Running, biking or any activity that involves getting up and moving.
  - Most importantly, helping children discover what tools work best for them.
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