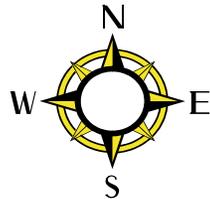


Suggested Resources

Hospice has several publications on how to help children when a loved one is dying or has died. This series is called Cultivating Healthy Griev-ers. 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 Things 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
P.O. Box 840
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

Preparing a Child to Attend Calling Hours and Funerals

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

Preparing Children to Attend Calling Hours And Funerals

It is normal for parents to struggle with whether or not a child should attend calling hours and/or a funeral.

The biggest concerns center on whether the child will find attending calling hours upsetting and confusing. In fact, with a little patience, discussion, and help from the funeral home, this experience can be a “teachable” moment for children.

Provided below are suggested guidelines when deciding if and how to include a child in a funeral.

Children and Funeral Guidelines:

Consider the age of a child and their relationship to the deceased. If a young child is able to sit quietly for a period of time, had a close relationship with the deceased and wants to go, then they should attend.

Ask them if they want to attend when discussing the funeral arrangements with your child. Never insist the child attend if they don't want to go.

Before allowing a child to attend a funeral you should explain the funeral to them in detail.

Explain that a funeral is an event where friends and family gather to share their sadness, memories, and love for the person who has died.

It can take place at a church, funeral home or a graveside.

Describe the services to your child in advance. Explain what they will see and hear. Remember that music, talking about the person, and prayers might be a part of the funeral service.

Explain that people will be sad and may cry, but that tears are how people naturally express their sadness. It is O.K. to cry.

If you are unable to be with your child, be sure to have an adult, who is not involved with arrangements, to be with him/her to comfort, answer questions and, if necessary, take them out of the room.

Why Children Should Attend

Children look to adults for help & understanding. Funerals provide a structured way to allow and encourage both adults and children to comfort each other and to openly mourn and honor the life of the person who has died.

If a child has asked to attend the funeral and is not allowed to do so, they may wonder what is so awful that they could not attend. Remember, children's fears are often much worse than real life.

Older children may want to share in the service by writing a poem or letter, or by selecting a song to be sung. Encouraging a child to be a part of the planning will help them grieve.
