

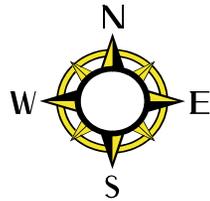
Suggested Resources

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 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

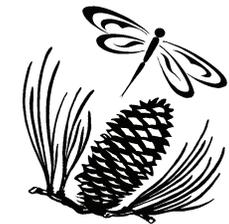
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Ten Things Everyone Should Know About Grieving Children

Compass Points: Navigating
Your Grief Series



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Ten Things Everyone Should Know About Grieving Children

Children experience grief. Teaching children to cope with and work through the grief that comes with the death of a loved one is a gift that lasts a lifetime. Equipping children with these coping skills has a positive impact in all aspects of their lives.

Consider the following points when you are to help a child navigate their grief:

Fact #1: Protecting children from grief *is not* comforting to them.

Fact #2: Death must be explained to children in very concrete terms. Children do not have the ability to understand the finality or the spiritual dimensions of death.

Fact #3: Children require an explanation of death in basic English, such as “Being dead means the body stops working. When someone is dead, they can no longer see, hear, sleep, talk, walk, run, go for happy meals, or play with friends.

Fact #4: Children require an understanding of what happened to their

loved one. While it is important to tell the basic facts about the death, it is not necessary or healthy to share horrific details or reckless rumors. Use the correct death language: “They are dead” or “they died.” Using phrases like, “they passed away,” “they are in a better place,” or “God needed Mommy home” are not helpful and are very confusing to children. Remember, they are concrete thinkers.

Fact #5: Children continue to grieve the death of loved ones as their understanding of grief grows. If Dad dies when the child is in first grade, the grief from this loss continues to pop up as the child grows. This is normal and to be expected.

Fact #6: It’s okay for children to attend funerals. Please consider, however,

BEFORE ALLOWING A CHILD TO ATTEND CALLING HOURS OR A FUNERAL SERVICE, THE FOLLOWING TWO RULES SHOULD BE FOLLOWED:

Rule One—A child should be asked if they want to attend. Let it be their decision either way.

Rule Two—If a child wants to attend, he/she should be educated, in detail, as to what they will see, hear, smell and touch at a funeral service. The Funeral Director can be very helpful with this task.

Fact #7: Do not discuss or share your thoughts about afterlife with children who are not your own. There are a wide variety of beliefs about afterlife which are rooted in faith and religion. Children do not have the ability to understand the abstract concepts of afterlife. Be respectful of their belief, and if asked, turn the question back to the child: “What does your family believe?”

Fact #8: Be aware of magical thinking. Children ages 6—9 believe they have the power to make things happen by what they think. If they yell at Mom or Grandpa, “I hate you. I wish you were dead!” and this person dies soon after, a child may believe they caused the death. It is helpful to check out what the child understands about the death.

Fact #9: Be aware that the memories of your own loved ones who have died may surface. Remember that children look to adults to teach them how to grieve losses. If you ignore your own losses, then by example, you teach children to ignore the pain, confusion and other challenges of grief.

Fact #10: For help in understanding how loss affects both children and adults, see the list of resources on the back panel of this brochure, or call Hospice for more information.
