

- Try to provide as much consistency and routine as possible. Children may test the limits and need to see that the same rules and consequences are enforced. This provides a sense of security that is important.
- Help children voice their concerns about safety and security. It's common for children to wonder if something will happen to them or their family. Provide reassurances of safety.
- If you have specific concerns about your child, or need help finding additional resources, contact your school counselor or school social worker.
- Remember, you are their model. How adults respond when someone dies has a major effect on the way children react.

Resources

RESOURCES FOR YOUNG STUDENTS

Elifton, Lucille; ***Everett Anderson's Goodbye***

A young child struggles through the stages of grief after his father's death.

Cohn, Janice; ***I Had a Friend Named Peter***

A young child's best friend is killed in an accident.

Dougy Center; ***After A Suicide***

A workbook addressing many issues related to suicide.

Greenlee, Sharon; ***When Someone Dies***

This book presents various feelings and ways to cope.

Grollman, Earl and Johnson, Joy; ***A Child's Book About Burial and Cremation***

Discusses how the body is cared for and why it is important to say goodbye.

Hanks, Bernice; ***Green Mittens From Grandma***

A little boy finds comfort in remembering all the things he loved about his grandma.

Hodge, John; ***Finding Grandpa Everywhere***

A young boy discovers memories of Grandpa after his death.

Holmes, Margaret M.; ***Molly's Mom Died: A Child's Book of Hope Through Grief***

Mellonie, Bryan & Ingpen, Robert; ***Lifetimes***
Lifetimes of many living things are discussed.

Temes, Roberta; ***The Empty Place***

Explores feelings and needs when a sibling dies.

Wilhelm, Hans; ***I'll Always Love You***

A little boy's pet dog dies.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

Centering Corporation; ***Sibling Grief***

Grief responses of siblings and suggestions of how to help.

Dougy Center; ***Helping Children Cope with Death***

Information on a child's understanding, how to explain death and ways to support children.

Fitzgerald, Helen; ***The Grieving Child***

Support for parents in discussing situations with children.

Lombardo, Victor S. & Lombardo, Edith Foran; ***Kids Grieve Too***

Discusses children's response to grief.

Rofes, Eric; ***The Kids Book About Death and Dying; by and for Kids***

Explains grieving from a child's point of view.

www.centering.org

Centering Corporation, Omaha, Ne. – Online grief resources.

www.dougy.org

The Dougy Center – National Center for Grieving Children and Families.

www.mourninghope.org

Mourning Hope Grief Center, Lincoln, Ne. Grief support groups and resources.

www.charliebrownskids.org

Support for children and teens grieving the loss of a parent (402) 483-1845.

Check your school's library for the "Mourning Hope Grief Bag", print resources for children and parents.



1-888-866-8660
For the hearing and speech impaired with TTY equipment call 1-888-556-5117

www.nebraskafamilyhelpline.ne.gov

- Trained counselors 24/7/365
- Children's behavioral issues
- Parent/child conflict resolution
- Youth mental health referrals

NEBRASKA FAMILY HELPLINE

**Need help? Don't know where to start?
Dial 2-1-1 or go to www.ne211.org.**

*Provided by LPS School Social Workers
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Helping Children with Trauma and Grief



Adults who are willing to talk openly about death help children understand that grief is a natural feeling when someone loved has died.

"There are no magic "right" words to say. It's the trying, the sharing and the caring—the wanting to help and the willingness to listen that says "I care about you". When we know that we do care about each other, then, together, we can talk about even the most difficult things and cope with even the most difficult times."

—Hedda Bluestone Sharapan

 **Lincoln Public Schools**
Department of Student Services

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Dealing with Trauma

- Trauma is defined as an emotional wound or shock that creates a substantial and lasting impression with the potential for distress and disruption.
- Trauma alters the sense of safety and predictability that children need to feel secure in the world. This increases the need to discuss their safety concerns and re-establish a sense of normalcy.
- Trauma can occur even when there is not a personal connection to those directly involved in the situation.
- It is most helpful to the child to have the opportunity to process their experience and feelings as soon after the event as possible.
- The trauma must be addressed before the healing process may begin.
- If the traumatic incident is highly covered in the media, it is important that children not be over exposed and be re-traumatized.
- Many of the responses listed in How Children Grieve will be similar to children who have experienced trauma, especially heightened anxiety, needing reassurance of their safety, and asking many questions, in addition to reliving the situation and feeling helpless.

How Children Grieve

- Children tend to go in and out of grief. This may be confusing to adults and children alike.
- Emotions may be expressed through behaviors. Especially young children do not have words for their feelings. Anger, withdrawal, anxiety, or attention seeking behaviors are all common responses.

- Reactions such as stomachaches, headaches, sleep disturbance, nightmares and the inability to concentrate or focus are physical ways children respond to death.
- Children may go back to behaviors of a younger age to seek comfort and safety, such as thumb sucking, clinging, and whining.
- A lack of questions or showing of emotions does not mean the child is not grieving. Children are protective of people they care about and feel responsible for causing their emotions. Explaining to children that they are not the cause of that emotion is important.
- Children's reactions differ depending on their level of emotional development, their relationship to the deceased, the information they receive concerning death, and their past experiences with death.
- Children may learn healthy coping skills through books you can read together.
- Children process their grief through play. It is helpful to allow children to express themselves by providing activities such as art materials, puppets or journaling.

- It is common for children to regrieve a death when they reach a new stage of development. Reprocessing information may help them gain a better level of understanding.
- Feelings about previous losses may surface as children learn of current situations. It is normal to regrieve past losses or grieve them for the first time when confronted with news of a death.

Talking with Children About Death

- Be open, honest and loving. Give your undivided attention.
- Use clear language (i.e. died, dead). Using phrases such as "passed away" or "at rest" can be confusing to children.
- Children under the age of 7 may not understand the finality of death. They may believe that the deceased person will reappear. Gently help children know that death is permanent.
- Give facts in terms children can understand.

- Allow for questions. Even if you don't have the answers, it's all right to say, "I don't know" and find someone who does have the answer if there is one.
- Use the name of the person who has died. Over time, continue to discuss memories. It is important to help children see that the person who died has not been forgotten.
- Help children understand that all people grieve differently. They may see others expressing a variety of emotions or none at all. It is important not to make judgments about how they or others "should" or "should not" be feeling.
- Remember your message comes through your voice tone, body language, and eye contact. It's fine to share your emotions as you talk with children. Through your actions, you are modeling ways for them to express themselves.

A Caring Adult's Role

- Children require extra time and care when they are growing.
- Adults should be aware of their own feelings and ways of coping with death. Those able to confront, explore and learn from their own experiences are better able to help children develop healthy attitudes as well.
- Children need to be surrounded by loving, supportive adults who will listen to them and encourage them to express their thoughts and feelings and ask questions.
- Trying to spare a child from the pain of grief, may exclude children from what can be a healing experience. Allow children to make choices about how they might be included in rituals, such as funerals, viewings and burials. Prepare children for what they might experience. If children aren't comfortable, they should not be forced to participate.

