

“When the loss of someone precious suddenly becomes part of your family's story, it can take enormous emotional energy to do even the simplest thing.

For you, if you're already grieving, this is a tough time to do extra work – the work of learning how to help your children grieve well. But you are wise to take that step – to do the work, to learn. You and your children will be much better for it.

As difficult as this time may be for you, what you model for your children now is very important. It will very likely become your child's blueprint for dealing with all the painful losses they will face in life.”

Catherine Wilson, Focus on the Family Canada

Each of us approaches grief differently – and so do children. Their reactions may not meet our expectations. Mood swings from rage to appearing as if nothing has changed are not uncommon. A child may be in floods of tears one moment, then playing happily the next.

Living with grief is a messy and exhausting business. It can't be rushed, and we need to resist the urge to make everything better. Making it safe for your child to express their feelings and show their emotion will help the process. Reassure them that you will go through this together – they are not on their own.

Things that might help

- Create invitations and space for conversation. A way in might be, 'I've been thinking about how much I miss X. It makes me sad. Have you been thinking about them? It won't make me feel worse if we talk about them. I might cry, but that's alright.'
- Reassure your child that it is alright to remember, to talk about sadness or anger or shock or to be silent. Affirm their feelings but give them hope that things will not always feel this painful.
- Resist trying to divert children from expressions of grief. Help them to face their pain rather than hide from it.
- Try to keep routines as normal as possible (regular meals, bedtimes, activities)
- Find ways to build memories – a slide show from photos, filling a memory box, sharing a meal that includes the deceased person's favourite foods
- Take time to create moments of stillness and remembrance, possibly lighting a candle as a focus
- If the person who died was a Christian, sing or play their favourite hymns or songs, read their favourite Bible stories or share their favourite prayers.

Our Christian faith

Remembering is an important part of Christian faith. In the Old Testament, the people of God often made cairns (piles of stones) to mark a place when God felt especially close (Genesis 28: 10-19; Joshua 4:1-9; 1 Samuel 7:12). In the Last Supper, Jesus gave us a way of remembering him in bread and wine (Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). And after his resurrection, Jesus promised that he will be with us '...to the end of the age' (Matthew 28:20).

Finding ways to remember the person who has died is an important part of the grieving process. As Christians, we do so remembering that God is with us in this world and the next, and we entrust our loved one to God's care.

Additional resources

In a ***BRF Parenting for Faith*** podcast, Annie Willmott shares tips about talking with children about death.

Child Bereavement UK has a number of resources for supporting a child’s grief journey , as well as outlining how different ages may react to bereavement.

See Saw has downloadable booklets for supporting a child when someone important in their life has died.

Source URL: *<https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/faith-home/i-am-parent/how-can-i-help-my-children-grieve>*