



www.nationalallianceforgrievingchildren.org

10 Things Grieving Children

Want You to Know

#1 – Grieving children want to be told the truth.

Tell grieving children the truth with these considerations in mind:

The age of the child

The maturity level of the child

The circumstances surrounding the death

Answer questions as honestly as you can

#2 – Grieving children want to be reassured that there will always be someone to take care of them.

Grieving children spend a lot of time worrying about another person in their life who might die.

To help alleviate this fear, it's important to reassure them that there will always be someone in their life who will take care of them.

Enlist the aid of their parent or caregiver to determine a plan for the children. Let the children know what the plan is.

#3 – Grieving children want you to know that their grief is long lasting.

Children will grieve the person who died for the rest of their life.

Grieving kids don't "just get over it".

They will often be bewildered when other people in their life have seemed to move on.

Their grief changes over time as they grow and change over time.

#4 – Children often cope with grief and loss through play.

Children grieve through play.

Typically, they cannot sustain prolonged grief.

Children use play as a way to cope with their grief and to take a break from the grief.

#5 – Grieving children want you to know that they will always miss the person who died.

People die, but love doesn't die.

Grieving children will miss the person who died for as long as they live.

#6 – Often, grieving children want to share their story and talk about the person who died.

Having an opportunity to tell his or her story is often beneficial to a child's healing process.

Sharing memories about the person who died is also very important.

Grieving children don't want to forget the person who died – they are also worried that others will forget their person.

#7 – Every child grieves differently.

Every child has his or her own grief journey and own way of grieving.

Some children might be more expressive with their grief.

Some children might keep it all in.

Siblings grieve differently.

Just because children come from the same family doesn't mean that their grief will be the same.

It is important to honor each child's story, even if it is different than his or her sibling's story.

#8 – Grieving children often feel guilty.

Grieving children will often feel pangs of guilt.

Even if the guilt is not justified and has no basis in reality.

#9 – Even though I might be acting out, what I'm really feeling is intense emotions of grief.

Grieving children frequently feel sad, angry, confused, or scared.

Since they might not know how to express all of these emotions, they often end up acting out instead.

#10 - If you're not sure what a grieving child wants, just ask him!

When in doubt, ask a grieving child how you can help.

Check in with the child, do they want to talk about the person who died? Maybe not.

Expect myriad answers.

Do they want to write about their grief or do some other activity to express their grief?

What do they need?

You can help grieving children by:

Listening

Really hearing them when you're listening

Following their lead

Validating their feelings

Answering their questions

Seeking out additional resources, as needed

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