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talks about

Some Thoughts for Parents on Helping Their Children Grieve

- **GRIEF IS WORK.** The work of grieving involves adjusting to the loss. The hard work of grief results in us accepting the reality of the loss and learning to live with what has happened, what has been lost and actively live in the present.
- **GRIEF VARIES.** The work of grief occurs over a long period of time and will fluctuate in intensity. It is common for the grief reaction to ebb and flow in intensity over a year or more.
- **TALK & LISTEN.** Talk with your child/teen. Provide simple accurate information to questions. Allow them to tell their stories about what happened. You are very important to your child/teen.
- **SHARE YOURSELF.** Talk with your child/teen about your own feelings. Let them know how this loss has affected you. Give them permission to feel sadness, confusion, anger, etc.
- **SHARE YOUR FAITH.** Be real. Acknowledge your faith, acknowledge your questions.
- **LISTEN SOME MORE.** Listen to what your child/teen says and how they say it. Repeating your child/teens words and recognizing fear, anger, anxiety and insecurity is very helpful. For instance, you can say, "You're afraid that..." or "You wonder if..." This helps both you and the child/teen clarify feelings.
- **REASSURE YOUR CHILD/TEEN.** Tell them the truth: "We are together." "We care about you." "We will take care of you." "God is with you." "You are loved by God and by me."
- **HOLD YOUR CHILD/TEEN.** Provide comfort. Touching is important for children/teens during this period.
- **BEDTIME IS SPECIAL.** Spend extra time putting your child to bed. Talk and offer assurance. Leave on a light if necessary.
- **PLAY.** Provide play experiences to relieve tensions.
- **ALLOW.** Allow children/teens to mourn and grieve. Allow them to grieve in their own way, in their own time.
- **RESPECT.** Respect a child's need to grieve when they need to grieve. Almost anything can trigger grief.

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- **GRIEF IMPAIRS.** Realize that grief may result in difficulty in concentration. Children often experience a shortened attention span and school work is often affected.
- **BE REALISTIC.** Set realistic goals with children concerning their behavior, school performance and homework.
- **MAINTAIN A DAILY ROUTINE.** Continuity becomes a safety net for grieving children. The continuity of attending school daily, being required to perform certain tasks in and out of school and having a social routine provides a sense of security and stability.
- **STAY AVAILABLE.** Griefwork takes time. Continue to be available long after you think they should be over it. Understand that children will continue to deal with the losses/changes they experience as they grow and mature. They will not “get over it” but will learn, grow and heal.
- **PRAY!** Pray for your child/teen and pray with your child/teen.

Children/Teens who are having serious problems with grief may show one or more signs:

- an extended period of depression in which the child/teen loses interest in daily activities and events
- inability to sleep, loss of appetite, prolonged fear of being alone
- acting much younger than their age for an extended period
- chronic refusal to talk about the loss and the impact on the child/teen or obsessional talk about the loss
- marked irritation, anger, displaced anger, chronic agitation
- excessively imitating the deceased
- repeated statements of wanting to join the deceased
- withdrawal from friends, usual activities
- sharp drop in school performance or refusal to attend school

**THESE WARNING SIGNS MAY INDICATE THAT
ADDITIONAL HELP MAY BE NEEDED.**



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