



Tips for Interacting with Kids about Loss

- ❖ Assess your personal grief history and how it influences your biases and perspectives on loss.
- ❖ Be careful not to project that children will (or should) feel exactly as adults do.
- ❖ Prepare the child for what he/she can expect in a new situation.
- ❖ Don't assume that if children are not talking about loss it hasn't affected them.
- ❖ Show affection and let them know that they are loved and will be taken care of.
- ❖ Short-term regressive behaviors are normal. Offer your presence and support.
- ❖ Respect wavelike quality in children's capacity to mourn.
- ❖ Model expression of your own feelings and memories.
- ❖ Encourage child to teach you of his/her memories.
- ❖ Allow children to be involved in memorial rituals.
- ❖ Be mindful of significant dates/holidays.
- ❖ Be careful not to encourage hyper-maturity.
- ❖ Respond to inquiries honestly and lovingly.
- ❖ Provide youth with terms for some of their feelings.
- ❖ Children commemorate who and what was lost in ways uniquely meaningful to them. Provide opportunities for: silence, talk, creative outlets, construction, physical activity, writing, reading, etc.
- ❖ Allow time to grieve, and more time.
- ❖ Offer constructive outlets for a range of emotions related to grief.
- ❖ Tolerate some acting out *if* it is not harming self or others (Withdrawal is a very common adolescent response to grief in the short term.).
- ❖ Access support groups.
- ❖ Allow and encourage search for meaning questions.
- ❖ Remember, **it is okay to not have answers.**

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(Ideas compiled from books by Wolfelt, Trozzi and Doka)