



Healing Hearts - Finding Hope: Grief Support for the Whole Family

There are many books available in your local library about children and grief. Additional resources for parents and children include:

The Dougy Center has the most complete resource list for children and grief.
Website: www.dougy.org

Cosby, B. (2000). The Day I Saw My Father Cry. New York: Scholastic, Inc.

Dower, L. (2001). I will Remember You: What to Do When Someone You Love Dies, A Guidebook Through Grief for Teens. New York: Scholastic, Inc.

Johnson, J. & Johnson, M. (1978). Tell Me Papa: Answers to Questions Children Ask about Death and Dying. Centering Corporation.

Karst, P.; . (2000) The Invisible String. Camarillo, CA: DeVorss Publications.

Mundy, M. (1998). Sad Isn't Bad: a Good Grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing with Loss. Abbey Press.

Thomas, Pat (2000). I Miss You. New York: Barron's Educational Series.

Wolfelt, A.D. (1996). Healing the Bereaved Child. Fort Collins: Companion Press.

Call the Bereavement Line for more information: **912-267-5462**

Hospice of the Golden Isles is pleased to announce our new grief support program for families. We recently constructed a bereavement center on our campus and can now offer more extensive family programs.

Your family can learn about grief and healing and find support with others who have lost loved ones.

Call 912-267-5462 to register if you are interested in a group or need individual consultation.

Other ongoing Bereavement Support Groups

Compassionate Friends

Second Monday of the Month from 6:00 - 8:00pm
Hospice of the Golden Isles, Bereavement Center
1692 Glynco Parkway, Brunswick, Georgia 31525

Glynn County Grief Support Groups

First Tuesday of the Month from 5:30pm -6:45pm
Hospice of the Golden Isles, Bereavement Center
1692 Glynco Parkway, Brunswick, Georgia 31525

Camden County Grief Support Group

Second Tuesday of the Month from 10:00-11:15am
Medical Pavilion
2040 Dan Proctor Drive
Suite 150
St. Mary's, GA 31558

Parent's Guide for Grieving Children

**Ask for help
for yourself and your
child.**

**Adults need friends
and family who can
listen and provide
needed support**

**Adults and children
need safe places to
talk about how they
feel.**

**Children act out
feelings about their
loss in play.**

**All feelings are real.
Feelings are not right
or wrong, they are
your feelings.**

***If we are old enough to
love, we are old
enough to grieve.***



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REMINDERS

Take care of yourself so that you can be available for your children.

Listening is the best gift you can give your child.

- Answer questions honestly and simply.
- Ask your child questions about what they believe. You can offer them your understandings of life and death and hope, but listen to their ideas. You can learn from each other.
- Avoid judgments. Feelings are not right or wrong—they are unique to the person.

Be Honest

- Use language appropriate for your child's age. But do not be afraid to speak the truth. For example: people die—they do not go to sleep.
- Speak simply, but truthfully. A child's imagination, or what they overhear, causes more fear than the truth simply stated.
- Ask your child what they understand. Then you will know what they believe and how they are making sense of their loss.
- Do not correct what they believe, if it brings them comfort. A child's understanding will change, just as yours will. Be gentle and patient with their fears.

Be prepared to talk about what brings you comfort and what you believe.

- Your faith may be comforting to you, or you may be angry and struggling to believe. Both are expected and normal.
- Avoid taking away a child's understanding of life and death if it is comforting to them at this time. Grandpa can be a cloud for a while. Or they can see a butterfly because Mom sent one.
- You can believe differently and still be comforting for each other if you listen to each other. Model respecting differences of belief.

Age Matters

Telling stories of your loved ones is important for any age. Children need to know it is safe to talk about death. We do not process feelings of loss in stages; but in waves of sadness, anger, happy memories, distracting play and work, and times of tears and loneliness. All feelings are normal in grieving.

Children understand and talk about death differently than adults.

- **Preschool** age and very young children will ask the same question repeatedly and have little concept of the finality of death. They may expect their loved one to come back and a child may act younger than their age. This behavior shows how much they need safe and caring adults while they struggle to cope with the reality of the death.
- **Elementary** age children continue to act out their grief primarily in their play and may need constant reassurance and time for loving support and acceptance. Children this age are prone to feel guilty, or concerned about their thoughts, or sense of responsibility for the death.
- **Young adolescents** can understand the permanence of death and may be angry at life, withdraw, or act out in school. They need time and patience and someone who is not afraid of their questions about life and death. It can be hard to distinguish what is normal adolescence and what is grief at this age. Grief is a challenge for those who are questioning everything.
- **Teenagers** often have to take on more responsibility and may struggle with resentment and need help with coping skills. They often seek more support from their peers than family.

When to Seek A Professional

Normal physical and behavioral symptoms can increase, or be prolonged for over 6 months, and these may indicate a need for additional help or an assessment by a professional. If these symptoms persist, seek help from a physician, school counselor, hospice bereavement coordinator or other trained professional.

Some symptoms that you may notice are:

- Sleep disturbances—nightmares, fears of sleeping alone, insomnia.
- Loss of pleasure or interest in daily activities interfering with ability to function at home, school, or with friends.
- Stomachaches or other physical ailments that prevent a child from participating in their previously enjoyed activities.
- Social Isolation or withdrawal from family and friends.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Appetite loss or increase.
- Lack of concern about appearance and hygiene.
- Uncontrolled anger outbursts that are persistent and frequent.

Remember what we call depression and grief can go hand in hand. Depression and grief are often linked and the feelings seem the same. If you are concerned, ask for help. Children carry their pain in their bodies and may not be able to express their feelings with words. What may be normal for a while, can indicate a cry for help as time goes on. **Ask** your child how they feel. Provide opportunities for family time, alone time, and ask for professional help if you are concerned. Age and development change how grief is expressed and experienced. Children may not know they need help. They need you to listen to what they say and notice how they act. They don't need your judgment. They need your love, patience, and security.