

Resources Shared By the District for Parents/Caregivers to Support Grieving Children

BELOW IS A SCRIPT TO HELP START A CONVERSATION WITH YOUR CHILD:

1. Adult: "Did you hear anything today at school that was sad or surprising?" Don't assume that your child already knows. Meet them where they are and let them lead the conversation.
2. Adult: "I heard today that one of the children in your school died." It is important to be honest, but at an age appropriate level. WAIT to see how the child responds.
3. Adult: "It's possible that people in school will be talking about it so I wanted to talk about it with you in case you have questions or big feelings" Each child responds differently. Children may have an increased sense of fear for their safety and yours or may be afraid to return to school. Reassure your child that they are safe. Children usually have lots of questions. It will be important to answer them honestly but at an age appropriate level. Children process information in fragments. They may take it in and then quickly move onto something else. Children may just want to be with their friends
4. Adult: "This is a really [insert emotion such as sad, disappointing, etc.] situation." Wait to see if the child has ideas of her own. Validate your child's feelings, whatever they might be. Allow for grief but don't assume what the impact to your child might be. Let them know that it makes sense to be sad but that any feelings they have are okay
5. Adult: "I want you to know that you can talk to me any time you have questions or big feelings about this. Who is someone else you might talk to? Who can you talk to at school?" Communicate your love and allow them to explore their reactions. Often, reassurance and love are the most meaningful things we can do for our children.

BELOW IS A SCRIPT IF YOUR CHILD BRINGS UP THE DEATH:

Child states that they heard about someone at school dying. Don't assume the child has all of the correct information. Clarify any misconceptions.

Adult: "What did you hear at school?"

Adult: How did you feel when you heard that? How do you feel now?

If your child brings up details or questions that are not age appropriate to discuss:

Adult: "What's important to know is that someone died and we are all grieving in different ways."

WHAT NOT TO SAY:

Many common and well-intentioned statements are not helpful to grieving children and their families. Here are some comments to avoid, and suggestions for what to say instead. Don't worry if you've used these statements in the past. Children are very forgiving as long as they feel valued and supported. They hear our concern more than our exact words.

AVOID SAYING THIS....	...AND SAY THIS INSTEAD
<i>"I know just what you're going through."</i> You cannot know this. Everyone's experience of grief is unique."	<i>"Can you tell me more about what this has been like for you?"</i>
<i>"You must be really sad."</i> It is not helpful to tell people how they are feeling or ought to feel. It is better to ask. People in grief often feel many different things at different times.	<i>"Most people have strong feelings when something like this happens to them. What has this been like for you?"</i>
<i>"This is hard. But it's important to remember the good things in life, too."</i> This kind of statement is likely to quiet down true expressions of grief. When people are grieving, it's important they be allowed to experience and express whatever feelings, memories, or wishes they're having.	<i>"What kinds of memories do you have about the person who died?"</i>
<i>"My ___ died when I was your age. I know how you must be feeling."</i> It is not useful to compare losses. Keep the focus on grieving children and the family	<i>"I know how I've felt when someone I loved died, but I don't really know how you're feeling. Can you tell me something about what this has been like for you?"</i>
POINTS TO REMEMBER Listen more, talk less. Keep your own comments brief. Ask open-ended questions to help children discuss their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Avoid trying to "cheer up" your child. Grief is painful. Attempts to cheer people up or bring focus to the good things in their lives are likely to communicate that it's not okay to talk about the death.	

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [WHAT NOT TO SAY - COALITION TO SUPPORT GRIEVING STUDENTS](#)
- [TALKING WITH CHILDREN - COALITION TO SUPPORT GRIEVING STUDENTS](#)
- [HOW TO TELL A CHILD SOMEONE DIED](#)
- [Good Grief Resource Site](#)
 - [Grief in Developmental Stages](#)
 - [Tips for Supporting Grieving Kids](#)
- [National Alliance for Children's Grief](#)
- [Helping School Aged Children with Traumatic Grief](#)
- [Books for Children Dealing with Loss or Trauma](#)
- [After the Trauma - Helping a Child Cope](#)
- [Addressing Grief](#)
- [Additional Resources on WWP Counseling Site](#)
- [Helping School Aged Children with Traumatic Grief](#)
- [How to Help a Grieving Teen](#)