

CHILDREN AND GRIEF

June 3, 2023

Walking with your child through a grief journey is one of the most difficult experiences you can have as a parent. Often, you are experiencing your own grief at the same time. Psalm 27:5 tells us that God will protect us in times of trouble and be a safe place of refuge. Notice that the psalmist doesn't say that God will remove all experiences of grief and pain. God understands our pain. We see Jesus' reaction to death in John 11:33-35 when Jesus weeps over Lazarus' death.



Everyone grieves differently, and this is true for children as well.

Children tend to have “pockets” of grief where they are crying and sad one minute and happy and playing the next. This is normal. It doesn't mean they don't care or are done being sad or are “over” the loss. It's also important to know that children grieve differently at different ages, right from birth on up. An internet search can help you understand more about what you might see and experience for the age of your child. You undoubtedly want to do all you can to support your grieving child. Here are some things that may help you as you journey with your child through grief.

1. **Use age-appropriate, honest language.** Avoid phrases like “went to sleep” or even “passed away.” Children can handle words like “died”. Leaving things out leaves room for the child's imagination to fill in the blanks, and that is often scarier for the child than the truth. Share what is age-appropriate.
2. **Include children in the rituals or processes** (i.e. attending a funeral). Prepare them for what they will see, hear, and experience, and ensure them that you or another trusted adult will be there to support them throughout these steps.
3. **Share your faith beliefs.** Discuss with your child what you believe happens after someone dies, and share your comfort in God's promises of life after we die. Share the hope that we, as Christians, have that we will see our loved ones again and that God will one day transform our pain.
4. **Model your emotions.** Showing a range of emotions models to your child that they aren't alone in their feelings. Allow your tears to fall, and tell your child, “I'm really missing Grandpa right now.” However, avoid catastrophic speech (“I can't live without him”). Show your child that pain can be felt deeply but also managed.
5. **Find grief outlets.** Help your child find outlets for the physical and emotional pain they may be feeling. Allow opportunities for healthy venting of pain or stress (kicking a ball against an outside wall, hitting a pillow, ripping paper, going for a walk, run, or bike ride). Encourage play and time for fun. Let your child know that it's okay to laugh and feel happy and that it doesn't mean that they're not still sad about what's happening.
6. **Reach out for support.** If your own grief is overwhelming at this time, you can call in the support of a trusted adult to be with and support your child. There are many books and websites about children

and grieving. As well, your local hospice may offer bereavement support groups or other resources for your child. Further, if you are concerned with what you're seeing from your child, connecting with a child therapist, school counselor, or your family doctor would be wise.

Walking with your child through their grief journey is challenging. Remind yourself and your child that God will redeem all of the pain that we experience. 2 Corinthians 4:17 tells us that our challenges today will seem trivial compared to the blessings that God has yet in store for us. What a hope this is for us and our children!

Want to do a deep dive? Check out Family Fire's article [How to Help a Grieving Child](#)

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<https://kidscorner.net/parent-blog/children-and-grief>
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