



Hospice
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Guidelines for Helping Children Who Have Experienced the Death of a Loved One

1. Take the word “death” off the taboo list. Allow it to become a concept that can be discussed openly. Understanding is a life-long process that continues from childhood through old age.
2. Understand that mourning and sadness are appropriate for people of all ages.
3. Allow children to release their emotions. Let them call their feelings by the rightful names. It is not the expression of these legitimate emotions that is harmful, but their suppression.
4. Contact your children’s school and inform them of the loss in the family.
5. Seek help if you feel unable to deal with your children during this crisis.
6. Do not tell a child that he or she is now the man or woman of the house, or a replacement.
7. Do not use stories and fairy tales as an explanation for the mystery of death. Never cover up the facts with a fiction or a confusing interpretation that you will some day have to repudiate. A child’s greatest need is for trust and truth.
8. Do not let your children believe that you have all the final answers.
9. Do not be afraid to express your own emotions of grief
10. Continue to give assurance of love and support
11. It is important to note that how we speak to our children about death is dependent on where they are developmentally and that we don’t need to offer more information than the child is really seeking.