

BEING THERE FOR A GRIEVING CHILD
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When we are in the midst of grief, sometimes children are forgotten. During times of loss we must ensure someone is there, physically and mentally, for the children in our lives.

If you, as the child's caregiver, are not able to cope with a recent death; it is okay to call a trusted family member or friend and ask them to help you out.

There may be things that you need to do, such as going to set up funeral arrangements that depending upon the child's age you may want to have someone stay with them vs. taking them with you; as this can be a very hard time emotionally.

You should not shut your child out of this process all together. Depending upon the child's age you can have them help with things such as: selecting the music for the service and/or visitation, selecting pictures for a video and/or poster board; and selecting clothing for both the deceased and themselves.

Let the child know they may experience a multitude of emotions and this is normal. Let them talk about their feelings, but do not push them to talk about it all the time. Be honest and let them know one minute they may feel like laughing and at the next crying; and this is okay.

Have someone available to be present for the child at the funeral home, for the visitation and/or service.

Also, be honest with your child regarding the death of a loved one. Do not tell them things such as she is sleeping; as this can make your child afraid to go to sleep.

The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry states, "You should speak to your child's physician if they have one or more of the following signs, which persist":

Child loses interest in daily activities and events.

Not able to sleep, loss of appetite and fear of being alone.

Acting much younger than they are for an extended period of time.

Excessively imitating the deceased.

Repeated statement of wanting to join the deceased.

Withdrawal from friends.

Sharp drop in school performance or refusal to attend school.

Keep in mind however, that children grieve just as adults grieve; and that it is okay for them to feel sad.