

Providing Support to Your Child

- Talk with your child, using direct, simple language (euphemisms about sleep or resting places can be very confusing for children) and encourage them to ask questions or voice concerns. Although you should monitor the level of graphic details you provide, be honest about what happened. When children don't have enough information, they often fill in their own ideas about what happened or what may happen.
- Model grief for your child. Express your own feelings and worries, as well as how you are coping with those feelings. Don't be afraid to talk about it, so it becomes normal for your child to express when they are thinking about it. However, allow your child to guide this process by not forcing them to engage in conversation if they are not ready. It's just as important for them to listen to you process.
- It is okay to tell your child you don't know why something happened and to agree that it is not fair. Try to comfort them by sharing in their feelings, as opposed to telling them things that may or may not be true. Normalize whatever feelings they have, and don't be concerned if it seems they don't have much of a reaction at all.
- Try to maintain as much of a normal routine as usual, including getting enough sleep. Kids thrive on routine and it can be very comforting. Additionally, for many kids, engaging in regular activities helps distract their minds and allows them a break from the sadness around them.
- Provide opportunities for engaging in play, art, and writing to allow your child multiple outlets for processing.
- As a parent, you are your child's most important emotional support. Do not hesitate to engage in counseling, or your own self-care/coping strategies in order to be in the best possible emotional state to support your child.

Literature for Kids

What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies? by Trevor Romain

This book is set up in an easy-to-access question and answer format that covers a lot of important topics. You can pick and choose from among your child's questions, or just let them look through on their own. It includes some good ideas for processing grief.

Why Did You Die? By Erika Leeuwenburgh and Ellen Goldring

This activity-based workbook is meant for children to do with an adult. It begins with some information for parents about how children may experience grief, and recommendations around this. You can pick and choose activities you may want to do.

When Someone Very Special Dies: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief by Marge Heegard

This book is set up so that the children illustrate the book as they read it, giving them a way to process. It talks about topics like change, feelings, sharing memories, and feeling better. It is simple, but effective in its explanations.

Literature for Parents

Talking With Children About Loss by Maria Trozzi

This book isn't just focused on death, but rather on helping parents help children understand and grieve around a variety of difficult situations (death, moves, community tragedy, divorce, long-term illness, etc). Because of this, parents may find it useful in numerous circumstances.