



10 Things Grieving Kids Want You to Know

1. Children want to be told the truth about the death
 - a. Tell them in age-appropriate and direct language
 - b. Ask them if they have any questions and clear up misconceptions
 - c. As they grow, they will revisit their grief and will have new questions and new feelings
2. Children look to you as a role model for how people grieve
 - a. Share your feelings with them without the expectation that they take care of you
 - b. Model how you cope with your grief
 - c. You can't do it alone! Build your team to support you as you parent your grieving family
3. There is no right or wrong way to grief and no time frame for grief
 - a. Each child will grieve in their own unique way
 - b. They will grieve privately to shield you from their pain
4. Your child needs you to help them maintain their connection with their person who died
 - a. Children want to talk about their person who died
 - b. They need you to tolerate listening when they tell their story
 - c. They fear that they will forget their special person
 - d. Give them access to family photos/videos and other family members who can tell them stories about their person who died
5. Children express their emotions physically through play, art and/or behaviors which may be problematic for you
 - a. They can't always tolerate intense emotions or know how to talk about them. So, they need to take breaks to play and watch their shows
 - b. They might make decisions to cope that you may not understand or that might be dangerous
6. Children need to know who would take care of them if you could not
 - a. They may fear for your safety especially when you are apart
 - b. Knowing who would care for them offers some sense that they will be safe in a world that may feel chaotic and unpredictable
7. Children benefit from being included in mourning rituals
 - a. Your child needs the opportunity to participate in ongoing rituals
 - b. Rituals aid in their understanding of death and aid in their mourning process

- c. Rituals help them maintain the connection to the person who died
- 8. Grieving children need you to help them feel the world is a safe place
 - a. Provide clear and consistent boundaries, limits, and expectations
 - b. Give them space and time to safely interact with peers and adults outside of the family
- 9. Your children need to be taught coping strategies
 - a. Teach ways to comfort themselves in your absence
 - b. Use these to help de-escalate family tensions
- 10. Children need to be included when making decisions:
 - a. About how to celebrate holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries
 - b. Offer some age-appropriate opportunities for decision making, but remember some decisions are still grown-up decisions. These may include going to therapy or joining a grief support group.

Most Importantly: Children need you to take care of yourself; the better you adapt to life without the person who died, the better your child will adjust.