



# Helping Children Deal with Death and Grief

Children, as well as adults, experience shock, confusion and pain at the loss of a loved one. Parents can reduce their children's anxiety and pain by providing guidance and emotional support.

## SOME SIGNS OF GRIEF ARE

- Feelings of guilt
- Mood swings
- Hostility/aggressiveness
- Poor school performance
- Wish for own death
- Sleeplessness
- Depression
- Withdrawal

## HOW TO HELP A CHILD DEAL WITH DEATH

**Tell them the truth:** Give direct and simple answers for the absence or disappearance of a loved one. If appropriate, discuss terminal illness.

**Don't confuse them:** "Going to sleep" and "gone away" are not the same as dying. Children might expect the deceased to come back. Explain that death is final.

**Share experiences:** Allow children to attend a memorial or funeral, but don't force them. Let them know what to expect. Be ready to answer their questions.

**Face grief:** Let children cry and vent feelings to encourage healing. Discuss fears.

**Reassure them:** Hold children. Offer reassurance that someone will always be there to love them.

**Encourage the creative expression of grief:** Write letters, songs or draw pictures to say goodbye.

## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF SO YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF YOUR CHILD.

### WHO TO CALL FOR HELP

Center for Community Support and Research  
**1-800-445-0116**

**For more online tip cards, visit [kcsl.org](http://kcsl.org) under the "Resources" tab.**

**Parenting questions? Call the Parent Helpline.**

1-800-CHILDREN or email/text [1800children@kcsl.org](mailto:1800children@kcsl.org)



Kansas Children's Service League

