

10 Things Grieving Children Want You to Know

You can help grieving children by:

Listening

Really hearing them when you're listening

Following their lead

Validating their feelings

Answering their questions

Seeking out additional resources, as needed

#1 Grieving children want to be told the truth.

- Tell grieving children the truth with these considerations in mind:
 - The age of the child
 - The maturity level of the child
 - The circumstances surrounding the death
 - Answer questions as honestly as you can

#2 Grieving children want to be reassured that there will always be someone to take care of them.

- Grieving children spend a lot of time worrying about another person in their life who might die.
- To help alleviate this fear, it's important to reassure them that there will always be someone in their life who will take care of them.
- Enlist the aid of their parent or caregiver to determine a plan for the children. Let the children know what the plan is.

#3 Grieving children want you to know that their grief is long lasting.

- Children will grieve the person who died for the rest of their life.
- Grieving kids don't "just get over it".
- They will often be bewildered when other people in their life have seemed to move on.
- Their grief changes over time as they grow and change over time.

#4 Children often cope with grief and loss through play.

- Children grieve through play.
- Typically, they cannot sustain prolonged grief.
- Children use play as a way to cope with their grief and to take a break from the grief.

#5 Grieving children want you to know that they will always miss the person who died.

- People die, but love doesn't die.
- Grieving children will miss the person who died for as long as they live.

Used with permission from:



Lost & Found Grief Center 2016

417.865.9998

www.lostandfoundozarks.com

10 Things Grieving Children Want You to Know

#6 Often, grieving children want to share their story and talk about the person who died.

- Having an opportunity to tell his or her story is often beneficial to a child's healing process.
- Sharing memories about the person who died is also very important.
- Grieving children don't want to forget the person who died – they are also worried that others will forget their person.

#7 Every child grieves differently.

- Every child has his or her own grief journey and own way of grieving.
- Some children might be more expressive with their grief.
- Some children might keep it all in.
- Siblings grieve differently.
- Just because children come from the same family doesn't mean that their grief will be the same.
- It is important to honor each child's story, even if it is different than his or her sibling's story.

#8 Grieving children often feel guilty.

- Grieving children will often feel pangs of guilt.
- Even if the guilt is not justified and has no basis in reality.

#9 Even though I might be acting out, what I'm really feeling is intense emotions of grief.

- Grieving children frequently feel sad, angry, confused, or scared.
- Since they might not know how to express all of these emotions, they often end up acting out instead.

#10 If you're not sure what a grieving child wants, just ask!

- When in doubt, ask a grieving child how you can help.
- Check in with the child – do they want to talk about the person who died? Maybe not.
- Expect myriad answers.
- Do they want to write about their grief or do some other activity to express their grief?
- What do they need?

**WRITTEN BY: PAMELA GABBAY, M.A., FT PROGRAM DIRECTOR THE MOURNING STAR CENTER
FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN AND TEENS CAMP DIRECTOR, CAMP ERIN
(760) 836-0360 WWW.MOURNINGSTAR.ORG**

Lost & Found Grief Center 2016

417.865.9998

www.lostandfoundozarks.com