



CHANDLER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

Helping Students with Grief

Children and Grief

Grief is a normal and healing response to death. Everyone experiences grief in his or her own unique way. Children grieve losses in their lives as intensely as adults. Because children are often less able than adults to put their feelings into words, their grief is seen in their behavior. Children's reactions will differ depending on their level of emotional development, their relationship to the deceased, the information they receive concerning death and their past experiences with death. They may be confused about what has happened and worried about what might happen in the future. Children who are younger than eight years may not be able to understand that death is final. They may believe that they will see the dead person again. It is probably better not to force the idea that death is final on a child until they are ready to deal with it. If the loss directly affects your children, you can expect to see them "reprocess" it as they reach new levels of understanding. Even if your children were not directly affected, it is still common for death to trigger fears of similar losses in their own lives. This is especially true if your children have already experienced the death of someone close, or if it is a stressful time for your family.

Children need a caring adult during this time to understand them, support them and help them to express their feelings. Following are some common behaviors associated with children who are grieving and some ideas about how to help.

How Parents Can Help

- Be involved with your child/children.
- Observe their behavior.
- Listen to your children.
- Help your children explore their feelings.
- Reassure them that their feelings are normal.
- Give assurances of love, support and safety.
- Allow them their feelings without judgment.
- Let them feel their pain, do not minimize the loss.
- Use clear language (died, death, dead)
- Routine and consistency are important.

Books for Young Students

- Buscaglia, Leo. *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf*. The story of how life itself is immortal.
- Carlstrom, Nancy White. *Blow Me a Kiss Miss Lilly*. The death of an elderly friend.
- Clifton, Lucille. *Everett Anderson's Goodbye*. A young child struggles through the stages of grief after his father's death
- Cohn, Janice. *I Had a Friend Named Peter*. A young child's best friend is killed in an accident.
- Fassler, Joan. *My Grandpa Died Today*. The death of a grandfather.
- Gould, Deborah. *Grandpa's Slide Show*. Family memories are important after the death of a grandfather.
- Stiles, Norman. *I'll Miss You Mr. Hooper*. The death of a very special Sesame Street friend.
- Tejima. *Swan Sky*. The life and death of a young swan.
- Wilhelm, Hans. *I'll Always Love You*. A little boy's pet dog dies.
- Varley, Susan. *Badger's Parting Gifts*. Badger's friends deal with his death.

Books for Intermediate Students

- Clifford, Eth. *The Remembering Box*. The death of a grandmother, family love and tradition.
- Donnelly, Elfie. *So Long, Grandpa*. The approaching death of a grandfather and the relationship he shares with his grandson.
- Jukes, Mavis. *Blackberries in the Dark*. A young man's visit to his grandmother's home brings back memories of his grandfather who died in the spring.
- Orgel, Doris. *Whiskers Once and Always*. A young girl's pet dies.
- Smith, Doris Buchanan. *A Taste of Blackberries*. The loss of a special friend.

Some of these books may be available in the school library or with the school counselor.