

## Helps for Parents in Dealing with Grieving

(Based on some suggestions from Someone I love Died by Christine Harder Tangvald)

Include Children in Family Mourning – In loss of someone dear, include your children in the mourning. Give your children time and attention; include them in the family mourning so they don't feel left out. They need to have a feeling of belonging in times of sadness as well as in times of joy.

Talk About It – Encourage children to talk openly about how they feel. Listen to what they are saying. Phrases that begin with "I wonder..." or "One question I have is..." or "I feel..." can open communication to topics such as fear, guilt, anger, etc. It is important to talk about feelings. Use a normal voice for these conversations.

Respect Feelings – Invite children to participate in conversations, but don't force them to. Refrain from being judgmental if children do not act or respond as you think they should. Everyone responds to grief in their own way. There are many emotions associated with the grieving process: shock, denial, anger, frustration, sadness, fear, guilt, panic, despair, etc. Allow crying and do not encourage them to display unfelt emotions—let them feel how they feel, and assure them that it's okay for them to feel those feelings. There are not right and wrong feelings; there are just feelings.

Give Physical Reassurance – Hugs, hand holding, tucking in at night, and other physical reassurances are essential. Winks, smiles, and even a nod of your head can provide as much comfort as anything you might say.

Prepare the Child for Future Events – Explain step by step the procedures for what is going to happen now. Explain some important terms, such as casket, viewing the body, funeral, cemetery, and grave. Don't assume the children know what is happening.

Give Honest Answers – Answer each child's questions honestly, but don't go into more detail than is needed or can be understood. Gently explain the cause of death—accident, old age, illness. Children want to know. Assure them that nothing they have said, thought, or done has contributed to the person's death in any way. Assure children that this is not about to happen to them.

Provide Escape Time – Give children opportunities and time to interact with other children to escape the constant feelings of sadness that can surround a death.

Accept Support from Others – Accept the love and support offered from family, friends, church, and God. Allow others to show their love and care for you and your children during this difficult time.

Pray Together – Peace comes from the Lord. God hears prayers.

Review God's Plan of Happiness – Remind your children of the big picture; review the stages of our lives as outlined in Heavenly Father's Plan of Happiness. Life is not over when someone dies; it is just different, and it is a part of the plan.

Normalcy – Keep as much routine and "normalness" in life as possible. Routine helps children feel secure; it is predictable and safe.