

Helping Children with Traumatic Grief

After an important person dies, children grieve in different ways. When the death was sudden or frightening, some children develop traumatic grief responses, making it hard for them to cope with their grief. Here are ways to recognize and help your child with traumatic grief.

I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT:	YOU CAN HELP ME WHEN YOU:
1. My feelings about the death are confusing. Sometimes I feel okay, and other times I feel sad, scared, or just empty or numb. It's really hard to make the scary and sad feelings go away.	1. Talk about your feelings and encourage me to talk about mine as long as I feel comfortable. Listen to what's on my mind. Tell me honestly what happened using words I can understand. Help me get back to my regular routine and activities.
2. Sometimes my upset feelings come out as bad behavior.	2. Be patient until I feel OK. Help me put my energy into positive and healthy activities. Help me use words to talk about how I feel.
3. Sometimes I have trouble concentrating, paying attention, and sleeping because what happened is on my mind.	3. Understand that thoughts about what happened get stuck in my mind. Help me relax at bedtime by reading me stories or listening to music.
4. I might have physical reactions like stomach aches, headaches, feel my heart pounding, or breathe too fast.	4. Help me do things that make me feel calm, take my mind off things, or slow down my breathing.
5. Sometimes I wonder if the death was my fault.	5. Reassure me that it was not my fault.
6. I sometimes think the same thing will happen to me or other people I love.	6. Remind me about the things we do to stay safe and take care of ourselves. Help me remember all the people who take care of me.
7. I keep thinking about what happened over and over in my head.	7. Engage me in safe, fun, and relaxing activities that help me get my mind unstuck. Do not let me see it on TV or other media if the story is in the news.
8. Sometimes, I don't like to think or talk about the person who died, because it's too hard. I may not tell you everything because I don't want to get upset or upset you.	8. Don't make me talk about what happened or get mad if I don't want to talk about memories of the person who died yet.
9. I don't like to do some things or go some places that remind me of the person who died or how my life changed since the person died.	9. Don't make me go places if it still makes me too upset or scared.
10. I have trouble remembering good things about the person because I remember other things that make me too mad, sad, or scared.	10. Understand that I am still too scared and sad to think about the happy times right now. Help me to feel better.

If you have any questions about how your child is doing check with a mental health professional who has experience working with children.