

10 Needs Of Grieving Children

Children and Grief by J. William Worden

Adequate Information - Children need information that is clear and comprehensible. When they don't have sufficient information, they will make up a story to fill in the gaps.

Address Fears and Anxieties - Children need to know they will be cared for. Many children who lose one parent often fear the other parent will die too. Research shows that children need consistent structure after parental death to offset fears and anxieties and to support their need for safety.

Reassurance They Are Not to Blame - Bereaved children often wonder, "Did I cause it to happen?" They need to know that the death wasn't caused out of their anger or shortcomings.

Careful Listening - Children need to have a person who will hear out their fears, fantasies, guilt and questions and not minimize their concerns.

Validation of Feelings - It may be tempting to tell another how they should feel, but all feelings must be acknowledged and respected as valid. Allow children to express their feelings and thoughts in their own way.

Help with Feelings - Sometimes sadness, anger, anxiety and guilt are acted out through behavior. Adults can help kids express these feeling in safer ways through creative play, art, music and writing.

Involvement and Inclusion - Children need to feel important and involved before and after the death. For example, it is recommended that children over the age of 5 be allowed to make informed decisions concerning their attendance and inclusion with the funeral.

Continued Routine Activities - Children need to maintain age appropriate interests and activities. Adults sometimes need to be reminded that children cope and communicate through the use of play.

Modeled Grief Behaviors - Learning theory tells us that modeled behavior is one of the most effective sources of learning. Children learn how to mourn by observing mourning behavior in adults. Encourage children to think about, remember, and to talk about the deceased.

Remembering - Children need to have opportunities to remember and to memorialize their loved one as they go through life.