

Helping School-Age Children with Traumatic Grief: Tips for Caregivers

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. Below are ways to recognize and help your child with traumatic grief.

I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT:

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.
2. Sometimes my upset feelings come out as bad behavior.
3. I have trouble concentrating, paying attention, and sleeping sometimes, because what happened is on my mind.
4. I might have physical reactions like stomach aches, headaches, feeling my heart pounding, and breathing too fast.
5. Sometimes I wonder if the death was my fault.
6. I sometimes think the same thing will happen to me or other people I love.
7. I keep thinking about what happened over and over in my head.
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 upset you.
9. I don't like to go to some places or do some things that remind me of the person who died, or of how my life has changed since the person died, because I get upset.
10. I have trouble remembering good things about the person because I remember other things that make me too mad, sad, or scared, and they get in the way.

YOU CAN HELP ME WHEN YOU:

1. Talk about your feelings and encourage me to talk about mine as long as I feel comfortable.
2. Help me do things to feel calm, get back to my routine, and have fun again. Are patient until I feel O.K.
3. Understand that thoughts about what happened get stuck in my mind. Help me relax at bedtime by reading stories or listening to music and reminding me that you keep me safe.
4. Help me do things that make me feel calm, take my mind off things, or slow down my breathing
5. Reassure me that it was not my fault.
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. Listen to what is on my mind. Tell me honestly what happened, using words I can understand. Do not let me see it on TV or other media if the story is in the news.
8. Don't make me talk about what happened. Don't get mad if I don't want to talk it or about the person.
9. Don't make me go places if it still makes me too upset 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.

*Information provided from The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

If any of these problems get in the way of your child having fun, going to school, being with friends, or doing other activities, you can make an appointment with your child to see a mental health professional with expertise in treating traumatized children.



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