



Reference Sheet

- ♥ Talk about the loss with the child and tell the truth when questions are asked. Follow the child's lead.
- ♥ Listen, listen, listen....and listen some more. To children's words, actions, behavior and play.
- ♥ Encourage the expression of feelings of grief (sadness, anger, relief, confusion, guilt) through talk, journaling, play, arts and crafts, physical activity.
- ♥ Be honest--saying, "I don't know" or "I don't understand, either" is an appropriate response if it's honest—asking them what *they* think is appropriate as well.
- ♥ Allow for questions dealing with loss. For example, in a classroom, a teacher may choose an appropriate time for incorporating the topic of grief and loss or a specific question/answer period.
- ♥ Use the child's appropriate level of vocabulary to help him articulate feelings and thoughts about the loss.
- ♥ Use clear, concrete language – words like “dead, death, dying,” rather than euphemisms when talking about those topics.
- ♥ When discussing death and loss with children, make explanations simple and direct (e.g.” When someone dies that means their body is no longer working. Their heart stops beating. They no longer need to eat or sleep, and they feel no pain or discomfort. They don't need their bodies any longer. It means we will not see them as we were able to before.”)
- ♥ Share your own experience with a similar loss at their age if applicable and appropriate, with a focus on how you coped.
- ♥ Use the losses children experience as “teachable” moments (e.g., the death of a class fish or hamster, the wilting of the plants in the garden or part of a science project in class, characters in reading who are ill or have died, current events.)
- ♥ Be mindful of “special days” – children can make a memory card on mother's day or father's day card or make a card for a special adult in their life. They can write a letter to the person they have lost on the anniversary of the death or person's birthday, etc.
- ♥ Discuss with the child's school to allow the child to leave the room and take breaks when needed and permit a call home if he or she is anxious about a surviving parent or family member.
- ♥ Encourage the child to write, journal or draw about what happened.
- ♥ Encourage the presence of reminders & mementos the child can keep with them or in their locker. Encourage the child to make a memory box or book



- ♥ Make referrals to outside support people (counselors, peer support groups) and learn about grief yourself – read books, attend workshops, join a support group.
- ♥ Think deeply about losses in your own life. Allow yourself to mourn your losses.
- ♥ Encourage your child's schools to offer grief education workshops for its staff and teachers – such as Good Grief's "Conversations on Grief: Lessons on Loss from the Classroom of Life" workshop series.