



# Loss and Grieving

“If handled with warmth and understanding, a child’s early experience with the death of someone loved can be an opportunity to learn about life and living as well as death and dying.”

DR. ALAN D. WOLFELT  
*Center for Loss and Life Transition*



Please consider enrolling  
any grieving child in

## A SAFE HARBOR

### Children's Grief and Loss Support Program

- ⌘ An age appropriate grief assessment
- ⌘ A six-week activities support group
- ⌘ Education materials for the child's family

CALL 828-652-1318  
FOR MORE INFORMATION



*For more information contact:*

The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization  
1700 Diagonal Road, Suite 625  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Call our HelpLine: 800/658.8898  
Visit our Web site: [www.caringinfo.org](http://www.caringinfo.org)

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## Loss and Grieving



Helping Children  
Through  
Difficult Times





## Helping the Children Through Difficult Times

**O**ften when a loved one dies, we think we are protecting our children by offering simple, but evasive answers to their questions. These answers often confuse our children and increase their fear and uncertainty. Remember, children tend to take things literally. If we tell our children that someone has gone on a long trip, they will expect that person to return and perhaps feel guilty that they drove the person away. When talking with our children about death remember that honesty, compassion and above all, love, are essential in helping them through this time.

See other side for information on

## A SAFE HARBOR

Children's Grief and Loss Support Program

- \* Talk with your child in language he or she can understand. Complex medical terms are generally less effective than simple language describing the illness and circumstances surrounding the death.

*Try to confirm in your own mind that your child understands what you have said. Let your child explain back to you how he or she comprehends what has happened. Then help clarify any areas of confusion or misunderstanding that still exist.*

- \* Allow time for your child to express his or her feelings. Many feelings usually accompany a serious illness or death in the family. These feelings can and should be shared among family members.

*Encourage your child to ask questions and be prepared to give honest, simple answers. Remember to listen and try to understand what is being asked, and also, what is not being asked.*

- \* As an adult be a good observer. See how each child is behaving. Don't rush in with explanations. Usually, it's more helpful to ask exploring questions than to give quick answers.

- \* Share your own feelings with your child and encourage them to be open about theirs. Remember that you are their role model for how one goes about expressing grief.

Expressing feelings of love is extremely beneficial at a time of loss.

- \* Recognize that each child will grieve differently. How they grieve is influenced by the responses of those close to them as well as by factors such as the circumstances surrounding the death, their relationship with the deceased, their developmental level, and temperament.
- \* Prepare children for the events that will occur during the first few days following the death. Explain funeral rituals as a way to say goodbye to their loved one. Let the child choose the extent of their participation in the funeral and other activities. Even very young children can benefit from participating in such events, but should not be forced to attend.

*Help the child commemorate the life of the person that has died. Sharing memories will help to facilitate a healthy resolution of grief. Creative writing, planting the loved one's favorite flowers and other activities provide outlets for feelings and can be ways to maintain happy memories.*

Some content provided by Children's Hospice International, *Helping Children Grieve When Someone They Love Dies* by Theresa Huntley, and *Helping Children Cope with Grief* by Alan D. Wolfelt.

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HelpLine: 800/658-8898  
www.caringinfo.org

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