

Strategies for parents/guardians to support children through times of grief

Be yourself – Demonstrate your natural concern calmly and in your own words.

Be available – Spend time with your child. Attempt to distract your child by reading, walking, going to a movie, etc.

Listen – Let your child express his/her thoughts, concerns, feelings, and perceptions in a nonjudgmental, emotionally safe environment.

Explain – Talk about what you know in short, truthful statements. Don't be afraid to admit that you do not have all the answers.

Do not speculate.

Develop resiliency – Your child will look to you for reassurance. Do not convey your own feelings of hopelessness, but rather let your child know that they will get through this difficult period.

Provide comfort – Physical and verbal comforts are great healers.

Attend to physical manifestations of trauma - Children will often complain of headaches, stomach aches, backaches, etc. Monitor physical symptoms such as loss of appetite, anxiety, sleep disturbance, etc. and determine whether medical intervention is required.

Maintain regular routines – As much as possible, attempt to provide normalcy to your child. Humans are creatures of habit and derive comfort from regular routines.

Monitor media exposure – Do not overexpose your child to media reports (especially preschool and elementary age children).

Seek additional support – When appropriate, your child should be directed to community support agencies.