



Top 10 List for Helping Grieving Children & Teens

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10. Get rid of assumptions and let the child or teen TEACH you about their grief

9. Deal with the FACTS

By clearly communicating the facts of a death you can help prepare a child or teen for the pain of grief by minimizing the additional pain and confusion that occur when facts aren't communicated clearly or on purpose. Keep the facts consistent, clear and truthful.

8. Be Honest

Do not lie to children or teens. Trust is the essential element in all human relationships. *The trust of a child is trust in its most sacred form.*

7. Help with “connecting the dots”

Coach children and teens to continue to be true to who they are. Help them see how they can “take their grief with them” to their favorite activities and hobbies and even use those activities as an effective means for grief expression.

6. Encourage memorialization and ritual

Children and teens often have the best ideas for rituals – explore ideas together.

5. Connect with community (grief) resources

Peer support can be very healing for grieving children and teens as they realize that they aren't alone in what they are experiencing.

4. Identify Secondary Losses

Secondary losses can be past, present or future. They can be physical, relational or material. Identifying secondary losses helps give children and teens “permission” to feel their pain as they realize how far-reaching their grief is.

3. Validate feelings – especially anger

Many children believe there are *wrong* feelings. Validate any and all feelings and distinguish between feelings and behavior. Talk about the importance of expressing feelings and distinguish between the *good ways* and the *bad ways* of grief expression.

2. Model and teach how to honor life

There are two ways we honor someone special who has died:

- The things we do to show honor (lighting a candle, speaking their name, sharing memories, making a donation, visiting a place of memory, etc.)
- The way we choose to continue to live our lives

1. LISTEN