



Listen. Let the child know you are willing to talk with them about their loved one who has died. Allow the child to take the lead. Each child, and each adult, grieves differently. Honor the unique timetable of your child.

Encourage your child to express feelings. We cannot protect children from death. Use activities to help your child express their feelings. Be reassuring and comforting.

Take time to play. Children will move in and out of their grief. Playtime is important for children, including letting go and laughing.

Remember the person who has died. Remembering is part of grieving. Share your own memories. Talk honestly with the child about death. Encourage the child to share stories and memories of their loved one. Ask questions.

Include the child in the family grief process. Even young children grieve and feel the loss. Allow your child to join in viewings or funerals. Grieving together as a family can help children through the grief process.

Explain to your child what to expect. Be open about what happens at funerals. Talk about that missing a loved one who has died is normal. If your life has to change because of the death, be honest and open about it with your child.

Avoid euphemisms. To lessen confusion, avoid labels like “passed on” or “went to sleep.” Be honest and use simple words.

Reassure your child. Some children blame themselves. Reassure your child that nothing they have said or done caused the loved one to die.

Support when grief resurfaces. Grief comes and goes. Grief can be intense at times. It sometimes resurfaces when we least expect it. Continue to reassure and comfort your child.

For more information and tips, read “Life & Loss” by Linda Goldman or check <http://www.grievingchildren.net/>



Does a Problem Exist?

Children don't always tell you that they are grieving. But you will know by what they say and what they do.

Four things to keep in mind to know if a problem exists and perhaps some professional assistance may be needed:

Duration – How long the behavior lasts

Intensity – how strong or explosive the behavior is

Interferes with anyone's safety – Does the behavior interfere with anyone's safety

Does it seriously interrupt the child's development?

Children who are having serious problems with grief and loss may show one or more of these signs:

- an extended period of depression in which the child loses interest in daily activities and events
- inability to sleep, loss of appetite, prolonged fear of being alone
- acting much younger for an extended period
- excessively imitating the dead person
- believing they're talking to/seeing the deceased family member for an extended period of time
- repeated statements of wanting to join the dead person
- withdrawal from friends
- sharp drop in school performance or refusal to attend school

If these signs persist, professional help may be needed. A child and adolescent psychiatrist or other qualified mental health professionals can help the child accept the death and assist the others in helping the child through the mourning process.

For more information, visit the following:

https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Grief-008.aspx

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/signs-of-grief-in-children-and-how-to-help-them-cope-4174245>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/death.html>

MCEC[®] Parent Support empowers military-connected parents with resources to be their child's first and best advocate. Learn more about ways to get involved and stay informed about upcoming webinars, workshops, and additional resources by emailing Parents@MilitaryChild.org.



Books About Disasters and Loss

“Community Crises and Disasters: A Parent’s Guide to Talking with Children of All Ages”

by Korff, M.

“35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child” by The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children and Families

“When Dinosaurs Die” by Brown, L. K. & Brown, M.

“Life & Loss” by Goldman, L.

“Children Also Grieve” by Goldman, L.

“You Are Not Alone” by Hughes, L.B.

“25 Things to Do When Grandpa Passes Away, Mom and Dad Get Divorced, or the Dog Dies” by Kanyer, L.

“Helping Children Grieve and Grow” by O’Toole, D.

“Raising an Emotionally Healthy Child When a Parent is Sick” by Rauch, P.

“Beyond Grief: A Guide for Recovering from the Death of a Loved One” by Staudacher, C.

“A Bunch of Balloons: Workbook for Grieving Children” by Wofford, D.

“I Know I Made It Happen” by Blackburn, L.

Helpful Links about Disaster & Loss

Helping Children After a Natural Disaster: Information for Parents and Teachers: https://www.palmbeachschools.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_270532/File/Hurricane/Children/NaturalDisasterTeacherPar.pdf

Children, Adolescents and Families: Grief and Loss in Disaster: https://earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au/files/Disasters%20grief%20children%20and%20families_0.pdf

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Helping Children Cope with Disaster by the American Red Cross:

[https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/PDF_s/Preparedness Disaster Recovery/General Preparedness Recovery/Emotional/Helping children cope with disaster - English.pdf](https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/PDF_s/Preparedness_Disaster_Recovery/General_Preparedness_Recovery/Emotional/Helping_children_cope_with_disaster_-_English.pdf)

Disaster: Helping Children Cope. A Handout for Parents:

[https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families and Youth/Facts for Families/FFF-Guide/Helping-Children-After-A-Disaster-036.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Helping-Children-After-A-Disaster-036.aspx)

Caring for Kids After Trauma, Disaster and Death: A Guide for Parents and Professionals:

<http://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/caring-for-kids-after-trauma-disaster-and-death-a-guide-for-parents-professionals/>

Impacts of Natural Disasters on Children:

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1101425.pdf>

Kids Health: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/death.html>

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry:

[https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families and Youth/Facts for Families/FFF-Guide/Helping-Children-After-A-Disaster-036.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Helping-Children-After-A-Disaster-036.aspx)

Understanding the Impacts of Natural Disasters on Children by the Society for Research in Child Development:

<https://www.srcd.org/research/understanding-impacts-natural-disasters-children#>

General Helpful Links

Military Child Education Coalition[®] militarychild.org

Center for Parent and Teen Communication: <https://parentandteen.com>

Fostering Resilience: www.fosteringresilience.com

Military Kids Connect: <https://militarykidsconnect.dcoe.mil>

FOCUS (Families Overcoming Under Stress) teaches practical skills to help families overcome common challenges related to a military life: <https://www.focusproject.org>

Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC):

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/confidential-help/non-medical-counseling/military-and-family-life-counseling>

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- Military OneSource also offers counseling help: 800-342-9647 or live chat 24/7.
- Stress Management Plan by Dr. Ken Ginsburg:
http://www.fosteringresilience.com/stress_management_plan.php

Videos

- Seeking Professional Help when Children Need It:
https://youtu.be/SO5Tb_CE6RM
- Tips to Help Your Children Control their Emotions:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4n2MiGgDUI>
- Teenage Coping Skills:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8vVq2-TGaY>
- Routines: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jLU59JWAYk>
- How to Help Your Child Cope with Grief:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfwqMV8Wka0>

MCEC[®] Resources

- *SchoolQuest[™]* is an interactive tool, specially designed to support highly mobile military-connected parents & students:
<https://schoolquest.militarychild.org>
- Military Student Consultants: This program is the portal for all questions student and parent related. You can submit your specific questions concerning transition barriers and receive specialized support. To contact a Military Student Consultant, email msc@militarychild.org
- The MCEC[®] podcast series covers an array of informative and important topics with guests from all walks of life. Visit [Podbean](#), [Google Playstore](#), or [iTunes](#)

MCEC[®] Parent Support Resources

- Find other MCEC[®] Parent Support [webinars](#) related to this topic on our official website MilitaryChild.org
- Contact your local Parent Support team for workshops offered in your community:
<https://www.militarychild.org/programs/parent-to-parent>
- If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to:
Parents@MilitaryChild.org

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