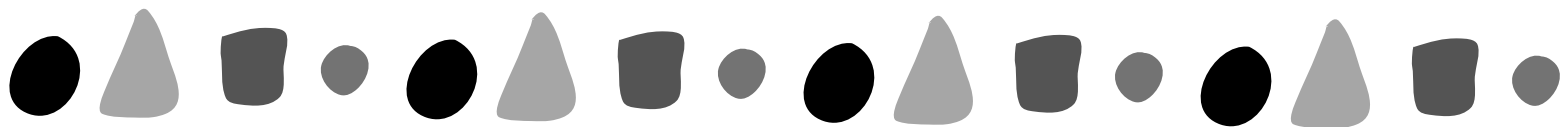


Help Us Understand Grief
HUUG
♥ PROGRAM

Information for Caregivers

HopeHouse 
COMMUNITY HOSPICE



Information for Caregivers

<p>Talking and Providing Information</p>	<p>Be honest with your child about dying and death. Children will sense there is something wrong and begin to worry and/or become anxious.</p> <p>When talking to your child use clear, concrete language at an age-appropriate level and avoid the use of euphemisms. Use the words dying, died, and/or dead.</p> <p>Invite your child to ask questions. Clarify what your child is asking or what they already know by using open-ended questions, and continue to check in to see if further questions have surfaced.</p> <p>If you don't have the answer to a question, be honest and tell your child you do not know. You can offer to work together to find out (if appropriate).</p> <p>Ongoing communication is important. Continue to check-in to determine if your child has any questions after they have had time to process information.</p> <p>Often children will ask the same questions multiple times in order to understand complex or abstract ideas. Be patient and repeat information, as required or requested.</p> <p>Reassure your child that there will always be someone to take care of them. Children will spend time wondering if someone else in their life might die.</p>
<p>Behaviour and Emotions</p>	<p>Maintain consistent routines and structure as much as possible. Children often need security, stability, and the structure of knowing some things have not changed.</p> <p>Be a role model to your child and express your own feelings; this normalizes and validates their feelings.</p> <p>Encourage your child to continue to play and have fun. Children need to know it is okay to still feel happy and engage in the activities they enjoy.</p> <p>It is common for children to regress to younger behaviours. Children may regress both behaviourally and emotionally. Provide them with extra nurturing to help them feel safe and secure.</p> <p>Children may express a variety of emotions, such as anger, sadness, frustration, fear, confusion, etc. Listen to them, validate their feelings and what they are experiencing, and provide safe and appropriate outlets for expression.</p> <p>Be sensitive to wishes for privacy. Children and teens may need more time to process death or grief before they feel able to talk about it.</p>

Information for Caregivers, Continued

<p>Saying Goodbye and Remembering</p>	<p>Prepare your child for what is to come and provide them with support when visiting loved ones in the hospital or attending funerals.</p> <p>Encourage your child to be involved in ways to remember your loved one by creating scrapbooks, a memory box, looking at pictures, or planting a tree in honour of your loved one who has died.</p> <p>Provide an opportunity for your child to say goodbye to their loved one in a way that is meaningful for them.</p> <p>Continue to talk about the person who died and use their name in conversation. Not talking about the person can give the impression that you have forgotten about them, which can be distressing; children may also fear upsetting you if they talk about the person, so letting them know you are comfortable is important.</p> <p>Create new family rituals and memorialize the person who has died when you can. Consider creating scrapbooks, a memory box, and so on.</p> <p>Certain days of the year (e.g., holidays, birthdays, anniversaries) may be particularly difficult for you and your children/youth. Try asking questions or sharing memories of the person at this time.</p>
<p>Circle of Care</p>	<p>Stay connected to your child's school and check in regularly with teachers and administration</p> <p>Create a network for you and your children/youth to rely on for care, support, and togetherness.</p> <p>Consider group support to allow children to connect with others who are also experiencing grief due to the death of a significant person.</p>

Grief Responses by Age

	Concept of Death	Grief Response	Common Behaviours
0 to 2 years	<p>Babies have no cognitive ability to understand; have awareness of acute loss/separation.</p> <p>React to emotions/behaviours of significant adults and disruptions in routine/schedule.</p>	<p>May search for the deceased.</p> <p>May feel anxiety as a result of separation.</p> <p>Irritability or protest.</p> <p>Increased crying.</p> <p>Change in sleep/eating habits.</p>	<p>Change in sleep/eating habits.</p> <p>Increased crying/fussiness.</p> <p>Temporary regression in milestones.</p>
2 to 4 years	<p>Death is seen as reversible/impermanent.</p> <p>Feels like abandonment.</p>	<p>Intense, but brief.</p> <p>Present-oriented.</p> <p>Most aware of changes in daily care/routine.</p> <p>Repetitive questions.</p> <p>Separation anxiety.</p>	<p>Regression.</p> <p>Change in sleep/eating habits.</p> <p>Bed wetting.</p> <p>General irritability or confusion.</p> <p>Acting out.</p> <p>Increased dependency.</p>
4 to 7 years	<p>Death may be seen as reversible/impermanent.</p> <p>Personification of death.</p> <p>Feelings of responsibility due to thoughts/wishes (magical thinking); misunderstanding of causality.</p>	<p>Increased verbalization.</p> <p>Concern with the process.</p> <p>Repetitive questions.</p> <p>Periodically act as if nothing has happened.</p> <p>General distress and/or confusion.</p> <p>Separation anxiety.</p>	<p>Regression.</p> <p>Nightmares or sleep disturbances.</p> <p>Eating changes.</p> <p>Possibility for violent play.</p> <p>Acting out.</p> <p>May take on role of person who died.</p> <p>Increased dependency.</p>

Grief Responses by Age, Continued

	Concept of Death	Grief Response	Common Behaviours
7 to 11 years	<p>Death can be seen as punishment.</p> <p>Fear of bodily harm/mutation.</p> <p>Understanding of finality of death.</p> <p>Understanding of causality of death.</p>	<p>Specific questions.</p> <p>Desire for complete detail/higher information needs.</p> <p>Concerned with how others are responding.</p> <p>Curious about the “right” way to respond.</p>	<p>Regression.</p> <p>Problems in school.</p> <p>Withdrawal.</p> <p>Acting out.</p> <p>Change in sleep/eating habits.</p> <p>Concern with body/safety.</p> <p>Thoughts about death.</p> <p>Role confusion.</p>
11 to 18 years	<p>Beginning to conceptualize death.</p> <p>Working to make sense of the world and mortality.</p>	<p>Possibility for extreme sadness.</p> <p>Denial.</p> <p>May be more willing to talk to people outside of family.</p> <p>Risk-taking behaviours.</p> <p>May mask feelings.</p> <p>Traditional mourning.</p>	<p>Depression.</p> <p>Anger towards caregiver(s).</p> <p>Non-compliance.</p> <p>Suicidal thoughts.</p> <p>Role confusion.</p> <p>Acting out.</p>

Suggestions and Resources by Age

	How You Can Help	Book Recommendations
0 to 2 years	<p>Use simple and clear language; avoid euphemisms.</p> <p>Maintain consistent routines.</p> <p>Offer additional physical comfort/affection.</p> <p>Inform daycare/preschool.</p>	<p><i>The Goodbye Book</i> by Todd Parr</p> <p><i>The Feelings Book</i> by Todd Parr</p>
2 to 4 years	<p>Use simple and clear language; avoid euphemisms.</p> <p>Provide simple and honest explanations.</p> <p>Allow some regression.</p> <p>Maintain consistent routines.</p> <p>Offer additional physical comfort/affection.</p> <p>Provide outlets for expression, especially through play.</p> <p>Inform daycare/school.</p>	<p><i>The Goodbye Book</i> by Todd Parr</p> <p><i>Chester Raccoon and the Acorn Full of Memories</i> by Audrey Penn</p> <p><i>Something Very Sad Happened</i> by Bonnie Zucker.</p>
4 to 7 years	<p>Provide simple and concrete explanations.</p> <p>Encourage questions and conversation.</p> <p>Provide outlets for emotional and physical expression.</p> <p>Inform school.</p>	<p><i>When Dinosaurs Die</i> by Laurie Krasny Brown</p> <p><i>What Happens When a Loved One Dies?</i> by Jillian Roberts</p> <p><i>An Emotion Called Grief</i> by Heather Eimers</p> <p><i>What Does Grief Feel Like?</i> by Korie Leigh</p> <p><i>The Invisible String</i> by Patrice Karst</p>

Suggestions and Resources by Age, Continued

	How You Can Help	Book Recommendations
7 to 11 years	<p>Provide honest explanations and encourage questions.</p> <p>Model positive expression of feelings and encourage expression of range of feelings.</p> <p>Anticipate and support “grief bursts” (sudden upsurges of grief/intense emotion).</p> <p>Explain options and allow for choices.</p> <p>Be available but allow alone time.</p> <p>Allow for physical outlets.</p> <p>Actively listen.</p> <p>Inform school.</p>	<p><i>The Next Place</i> by Warren Hanson</p> <p><i>Harvey: How I Became Invisible</i> by Hervé Bouchard</p>
11 to 18 years	<p>Expect reliance on peers rather than family.</p> <p>Remain open to questions and conversation.</p> <p>Maintain routine and roles.</p> <p>Provide outlets.</p> <p>Allow for choices.</p> <p>Encourage self-expression.</p> <p>Actively listen.</p> <p>Be available but allow alone time.</p> <p>Inform school.</p> <p>Do not attempt to take grief away.</p>	<p><i>Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers</i> by Earl A. Grollman</p> <p><i>The Grieving Teen</i> by Helen Fitzgerald</p>

Signs of Distress

It is important to be mindful of signs that your child or youth may require serious mental health support to help them navigate their grief.

Signs of distress can include things such as:

- An extended period of loss of interest in daily activities;
- Prolonged inability to sleep or eat;
- Prolonged behavioural regression;
- Excessive imitation of the person who died;
- Repeated statements of wanting to join the person who died;
- Sharp decline in school performance or repeated refusal to attend school;
- Self-harming behaviours or suicidal ideation.

Many of these behaviours for short durations can be normal signs of grief. However, should these things persist over a longer period of time, it is important to seek additional support for your child.

If you are worried about your child or they have displayed any of the above, we would be happy to provide you with some guidance and direct you to appropriate mental health services.

If your child or youth is in distress, please reach out to the following crisis lines:

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868

EveryMind 24/7 Crisis Support: 905-278-9036

If your child or youth is experiencing a mental health emergency that requires immediate medical or psychiatric attention, please **call 911** or visit your nearest **Emergency Room**.



Other Supports

BEREAVED FAMILIES OF ONTARIO - YORK REGION

bfoyr.com
905-898-6265

GILDA'S TORONTO

gildasclubtoronto.org
416-214-9898

CAMP ERIN

camperintoronto.com
647-957-2267

YORK HILLS CENTRE FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, & FAMILIES

yorkhills.ca
905-503-9560

AWC GRIEF SUPPORT

andreawarnick.com
1-800-490-9192

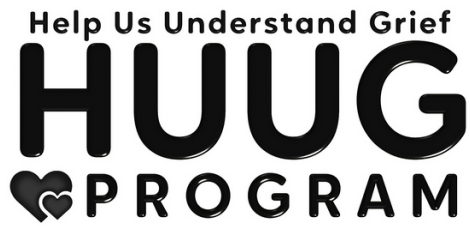
CANADIAN VIRTUAL HOSPICE

kidsgrief.ca
youthgrief.ca

LIGHTHOUSE FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN

lighthousegriefsupport.org
905-337-2333





www.hopehousehospice.com

**350 Industrial Pkwy South
Aurora, ON
(Main Office)**

HopeHouse 
COMMUNITY HOSPICE

