

RAINBOW CONNECTIONS

ISSUE 10 | FAMILY CHANGES AFTER DEATH

After someone in a family dies, there are many changes for the rest of the family. The biggest change is that the family just does not feel the same without that person at the dinner table, playing with the family, being around the house. It's hard to get used to your family being different.



You may be going through other changes too, like moving to a new house, a new school, or not being able to buy things you used to because there is less money. Often these changes are hard and the whole family feels more stressed. The word stressed means that people are feeling worried and tense or tight in their bodies, hearts and minds.

Sometimes that stress comes out at other family members in angry words and fighting.

Kids tell us that it is difficult when their parent or parents pay less attention to them because the parent(s) is so sad and/or angry. If this happens to you, it can help to tell your parents(s) how you are feeling and that you miss them. Sometimes when a parent has died, the children feel like the remaining parent is too hard on them. That parent may be trying to be mom and dad. The

"My family is not the same because there is an empty spot at the dinner table."

child may have felt more comfortable when there were two parents making decisions together about things. Kids also may have more chores and responsibilities than they had before the death. It's hard to get used to so many new things all at once.

In some homes the kids feel like they have to grow up all of a sudden, or take the place of the person who died. If your mom had died, maybe you feel like you have to take care of your brothers and sisters the way she did. Or

if your dad died you may feel that you have to be the man in the house. We want you to know that it is important for you to be a child now, and that even if you wanted to take your mom or dad's place you couldn't. Only an adult can be a mom or dad.

One other difficult thing kids tell us about is having their parents start dating after the death of the other parent. It is hard to get used to someone else being with your parent. It probably just doesn't feel right. You may

worry about this new person trying to take the place of the person who died. This thought may make you feel angry. It may help you to know that no one can ever replace your loved one. It is good to share any feelings you have about this with your parent or an adult who will listen and understand. It helps the kids in our groups to talk to each other about all of the changes. Then they don't feel so weird and alone.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Nadia, The Willful by Sue Alexander
When Nadia's brother died, their father, the Sheik, decreed that "no one utter Hamed's name." Nadia would not obey: she did not want to forget her brother. A moving tale about love, anger, and tears in the face of loss.

Geranium Morning by E. Sandy Powell
Two friends whose parents die, one suddenly in an accident and one from illness, learn to deal with their grief. The book includes feeling different and having problems at school, as well as changes in the family after a death, and dealing with guilt feelings.

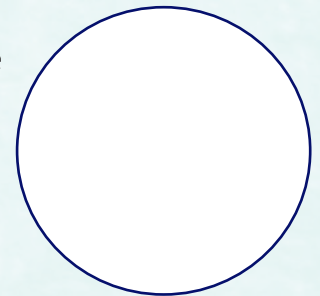
ACTIVITY IDEA

Memory Book

Draw or write about some of the changes you have felt in your family since the death of your loved one. You can add these to your journal or memory book if you're making one. If you can, share these with someone you trust.

Draw How You Feel

Use a circle to make a face showing how you feel today.



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SHARE HOW YOU ARE DOING!

Please call us if you would like to share your experiences with the feelings talked about in Rainbow Connections, or any other problems you might have. Kids are always teaching us about their grief and what helps them.