

RAINBOW CONNECTIONS

ISSUE 8 | WHAT KIDS NEED

Children who use our bereavement counseling services have given us some idea about what grieving children need. We'd like to share some of these thoughts with you and maybe you can add to this list from your own experience. You might want to share this information with your family.



Probably the biggest thing you need after the death of a loved one is comfort and love. With a death, our world changes. Children like to be reassured that some things won't change, that someone will make sure they are cared for and safe. We all need to know that we are important to surviving family members and that we have an important role to play in the family.

Another very important need you may have is to be told clearly about the death and about any changes in your family which are happening because of the death. If children aren't present at the death, they often want to know how the person died, what the body looked like, and what happened to the body.

Questions about the body sometimes include wanting to know details about cremation, preparation of the body for burial, or what happens to the body in the ground. You may be curious about what happens to the person after death.

These are all natural questions for children to have. Sometimes adults are uncomfortable with these questions because they think that children will be hurt by the answers. What we have discovered is that children feel more secure when their questions are answered. Without the information we need about death, we can imagine things that are more scary than the truth.

Here's what some kids in our groups said helped them:

"Talking with my friends and parents and other people."

- Denise

"Riding my bike helped."

- Robert

"When people were around me."

- Lindsay

Often when someone dies, children are worried about the health and well-being of their parents and others they care about. It's okay to talk to someone about your fears. It's helpful to express your feeling in other ways too, like drawing, painting, writing, throwing a ball, running, or hitting a pillow. Having a teacher or adult friend to talk to can ease the pain and confusion you feel. It's also important to play

with your friends and do fun things. Children need to have a break from their sad or angry thoughts, and playing is a good way to have a rest from grieving.

We've learned that children also feel better if they can share memories of the person who died. Children like to remember special qualities their loved one had and special times spent with their loved one. Sometimes you may not have anybody to share your memories with. You can write them down in your journal or draw pictures about them in your memory book. It's also helpful to make a photo collage or keep a photo collection and share it with others. Playing music that your loved one liked can remind you of that person.



ACTIVITY IDEA

Draw or Write

Draw or write about a special time with the person who died. Make a list of some questions you have about the death and share it with an adult you trust.

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.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Badger's Parting Gifts by Susan Varley
Old Badger was a good friend and teacher to the woodland creatures and they are overwhelmed when he dies. Then each remembers what Badger has taught them. A good story about old age and the importance of memories.

The Dead Bird by Margaret Wise Brown
Some young children discover a bird that has just died. They observe what dead looks like in an animal. They bury it with care and have a funeral for it.



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