

Talking with your Kids about Loss

Kids take cues from the grown-ups they trust the most. Talk about feelings a lot, including your own. It's normal to move from mad to sad to scared. Keep feelings as an open conversation. Cry in front of them. Share as much as is appropriate.

Do something concrete to help your child acknowledge the death and remember your loved one. Plant a tree, make a concrete stepping stone, frame a photo in your child's room. See the book suggestions below that include memory books and interactive journals.

Kids grieve in doses. Just like they can't stay underwater in a pool as long as adults can, they can't stay in their grief as long. It's perfectly normal and healthy for them to move from sadness to playing. Let them go back and forth.

A child can repeat stages as they grow older. The realities of their loss will evolve with their evolving mind and experiences. They will need you to grieve with them as their pain comes up afresh. They'll need you to sit with them and listen to them, rather than gently or strongly encourage them to move on.

Be honest and specific about the loss. They may need you to model talking through your feelings to work through theirs. Children are concrete thinkers, so avoid using abstract language. For example, say the person "died," rather than they "passed away." Don't use phrases like "God needed an angel" or "Their work on earth was done." Instead, be clear about what happened. It may feel harsh to you, but kids need clarity to help them avoid fear or confusion.

Allow loss to be an opportunity to lean together into Christ. As you grieve with your children in this season, they need to know the Comforter. They need to watch you dwell in Christ and receive the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Pray together as a family and read Colossians 3:15-17

Books to read with your child:

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death

God Gave Us Heaven

The Invisible String

Angel Catcher for Kids

If Nathan Were Here

The Healing Book

