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HELPING YOUR GRIEVING CHILD

HONESTY

Answer your child's questions honestly. As parents who love their children it is common to attempt to shield them from anything that may be difficult or painful. However, in dealing with loss "sugar-coating" the truth is not helpful and indeed, may be harmful. Use clear, concrete language when talking about death. Match the language patterns of your own child. Reassurance. Reassure your child he/she did nothing to cause the loss. Very often children make illogical connections between their thoughts and actions and the loss outcome. (i.e. being angry at daddy made him have a car accident)

STRUCTURE

Keep structure in the daily life of your child. The child's ability to predict his/her life happenings day-to-day helps decrease anxiety and feelings of loss of control. (i.e. keep a night time routine and bed time)

CHOICES

Offer choices as often as possible. Even the seemingly insignificant choices of food, where to play and when to bathe help to give back a sense of control and power to your child. (Be sure the choices you offer are acceptable to you.)

FEELINGS

Allow your child to have whatever feelings they may have in response to the loss. Sometimes children even need intentional permission to be happy when living with parent/parents who are grieving and sad. Children are much like sponges in absorbing the

mood and level of tension in a household. They may believe their feelings should match that of others.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

This is an important outlet for children who have experienced a significant loss. Encourage physical play outdoors when possible. Take walks, play ball, or swim together. Physical outlets assist adults in grief as well.

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