

ENGAGE YOUR FAITH BY...

Isaiah 41:10

So do not be afraid. I am with you. Do not be terrified. I am your God. I will make you strong and help you. I will hold you safe in my hands. I always do what is right.

Pray this over your child:

Father, we pray for peace and comfort. We ask that you pull our family close together and help us to love each other well. Please help us as parents to understand what our child(ren) need but may not be able to tell us. Wrap us tightly in your warm embrace as we navigate this difficult time and give us the strength to keep moving forward each day. On the days when it is hard to see the good, would you open our eyes to something positive and beautiful. God, we may not understand why we have to experience this loss at this moment, but we trust that you are good and perfect and will hold us safe in your hands. In your holy and precious name we pray, Amen.

RESOURCES...

> **Web**

childmind.org
healthychildren.org
focusonthefamily.com
todaysparent.com

> **Books**

God Gave Us Heaven by Lisa Tawn Bergen
Someone I Love Died by Christine Harder Tangvald
The Memory Box by Joanna Rowland



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#parentingmatters

PARENTING *resources*

PARENTING MATTERS: **LOSS**

— BIRTH - PRESCHOOL —

LIFE LOOKS A LITTLE LIKE...

Loss is difficult. During these years your young ones may not fully comprehend the loss, but they will likely notice how it is affecting you. Much like in an airplane, when you are directed to put the oxygen mask on yourself first, you can't help others through grief without first taking care of yourself. Make sure you have a network of support in place. Your child needs to see and experience that even through the hurt you are still there for them, physically and mentally.

YOU PARENT THEM WELL WHEN YOU...

KNOW:

One in twenty-five children will experience the death of a parent before they are 18. While babies and toddlers aren't able to comprehend death and loss, they are often high in empathy and will feel what you are feeling. Provide as much physical closeness as possible. It can be challenging for kids at this age to verbalize their thoughts and feelings. Imaginative play is a language of childhood so watch closely for what they are trying to communicate to you through their play.

EXPECT:

Preschoolers have a temporary view of loss. They are not yet able to comprehend the abstract idea of permanence and forever. Over the coming weeks and months that they may repeatedly ask when the loved one is coming back or when they will see them again. Similarly, because they are concrete thinkers and will form literal conceptions of the words you use, refrain from using phrases like "We lost Grandpa today" or "Grandma passed away." When explaining the loss to them it can seem harsh, but don't shy away from using straightforward language such as "I have some sad news to share with you. Grandma died this morning and we won't be able to see her anymore."

PREPARE:

Before you can properly care for your grieving child, you need to take care of yourself. Ask yourself, who do you need to talk to or lean on to help you through this time? Are you spending time with God, wrestling through what has happened and leaning on Him for strength? Even the youngest ones will sense how you are doing and take their cue from your emotion and strength. Find books that clearly communicate the message of loss for kids in a way that young minds can comprehend.

TALK:

It is just as important for you to find a community to openly share and process with as it is for your child. Even if your child is too young to verbalize their emotions, set an example for them on healthy ways to process grief. Be intentional to connect with loved ones who can help you process and cope. If your child is older, help them learn to name the emotions they are feeling. As they can put names to feelings, it will be easier for them to control their responses and for you to come alongside and help them navigate.

YOUR NEXT STEPS ARE...

Understanding the grief cycle:

Grief is a healthy manifestation of loss and trauma. It can come in many forms including...

- **Acute loss** - Grief brought about from an immediate incident.
- **Anticipatory grief** - A diagnosis or knowledge of moving to a new place.
- **Delayed Grief** - Grief that manifests itself at a later time when multiple losses happen in a short span of time.

Your child may experience denial, anger, depression, regression, and acceptance. These stages of grief can occur simultaneously or independently of one another.

DENIAL

- Looking for the person who has died or their old place of comfort.
- Fears larger scale emotions they might be feeling for the first time.

ANGER

- Lashes out at those closest to them who are trying to help.
- Irritable, more tantrums.

DEPRESSION

- Withdrawing, being quiet, showing a lack of response.
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits.

REGRESSION

- Regressing in progress; i. returning to crawling, wanting a bottle.
- Toileting problems, bed wetting, soiling.

ACCEPTANCE

- Finding new people or things to fill the void they've lost.
- Found a new way to cope with their new realities.

God has uniquely equipped you to be their parent. He has given you a church community to partner with you in areas where you fall short. You may not know all the reasons why your child or family have to experience loss, trauma or pain, but God knows exactly what it feels like to watch His own child struggle, grieve, and deal with loss. He is our hope and comforter, refuge in times of trouble, and our helper.