

ENGAGE YOUR FAITH BY...

Psalm 34:18

The Lord is close to those whose hearts have been broken. He saves those whose spirits have been crushed.

Pray this over your child:

Father, you know the pain we are feeling right now and the sadness that fills our hearts. We thank you for the memories that we have been gifted with. Although we don't always understand your ways, we trust that you are fully present. We know that you have your arms wrapped tightly around us now and we pray for your peace and comfort to fill our hearts. We ask that you will pull our family closely together and in the days and weeks to come, when grief suddenly overwhelms us, that we will remember that you are always there. Remind us that at any moment we can call out to you and ask you to help carry the burden. We pray that we would feel your presence Lord. We love you God, and continue to trust in your holy and magnificent name. 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

□ KINDERGARTEN - 5TH GRADE □

LIFE LOOKS A LITTLE LIKE...

Loss is difficult. At this age it is important to remember that symptoms of grief are equally valid after losing a pet or moving to a new community as after losing a loved one. Kids grieve in cycles throughout their childhood and teen years. Expect anniversaries or experiences that awaken strong memories to trigger fresh grief. In these moments, make yourself available to talk, or just hold them close as the raw emotion pours out. Parents get the privilege to walk with their children in sensitivity and grace as they navigate the healing process.

YOU PARENT THEM WELL WHEN YOU...

KNOW:

One in twenty-five children will experience the death of a parent before they are 18. While this may be one of the most traumatic forms of loss, this isn't the only loss that can cause kids at this age to grieve. Loss of friends, extended family, pets or even the loss of a home when you move to a new town, may land you as the parent in the position of helping your child find their way through the stages of grief. Knowing what words to use when talking to your child can be critical in helping them process the loss.

EXPECT:

Kids between the ages of 5-9 will begin to understand the permanence of loss. Younger kids tend to view loss or death as temporary. As kids process the loss, moods can fluctuate, swinging back and forth between tears one minute and playing happily the next. Playing is a healthy distraction that keeps them from becoming too overwhelmed or lost in the sadness. Encourage your child to express their feelings and share all of their thoughts, feelings and emotions.

PREPARE:

The death of a loved one may cause kids to worry about losing others. They may become worried or fixated on the idea of losing you too. Make sure you feel able to assure them that not everyone who gets sick dies, that you are healthy, and that there are also many other people that also care for them. Your child will find comfort in sensing that you are okay and taking care of yourself in a healthy way. Ask yourself, who do you need to talk to or lean on to help you through this time? Just like in an airplane, you need to "put the oxygen mask" on yourself before you can help your kids.

TALK:

Don't hide the truth from your child. Use age appropriate but honest language when sharing with your child. Be informative and open without being graphic or overly dramatic. Don't shy away from the words "dead" or "died" especially with younger kids. When you use words like "we lost your aunt today" they will often think literally and want to go "find" them. Don't feel the pressure to share everything and have a long drawn out conversation. Ask them what questions they have and answer them as honestly as you can. Encourage them to come back with more questions at any time.

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, bargaining, and acceptance. These stages of grief can occur simultaneously or independently of one another.

DENIAL

- Feeling embarrassment or different from others; may conceal their loss
- 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.
- Anxious, irritable. Increased fears.

DEPRESSION

- Changes in eating or sleeping habits.
- Hostility towards friends who may have something that they lost.

BARGAINING

- Repeated conversations about "what if's."
- Attempts to negotiate to return things to as normal as possible.

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.