



CHILDREN'S GRIEF EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

WORDS THAT CAN HELP

Offering support to a grieving child can begin with a simple statement or open-ended question. Here are some conversation starters:

- I'm sorry your mom/dad/sister died.
- What was your dad/mom/brother like?
- Tell me about your _____.
- What was his favorite food?
- What do you miss the most?
- What is the hardest part for you?
- What is the hardest time of day for you?
- I cannot know how you feel, but I remember how I felt when my _____ died.
- I care about you.
- I care about how you are feeling.
- Is there anything I can do in the classroom to help?
- Is there anything in the classroom you would like to change to feel more comfortable?
- Would you like to talk about it?
- I'm available at this time, if you would like to come by to talk.
- Whenever you want to talk about it, I'm here for you.
- I'm thinking about you especially today because I'm aware that today is your mother's birthday (anniversary of the death, your birthday, etc).
- I'm here to listen if you want to talk, or just spend time together if you don't want to talk.
- When is your recital (game, rehearsal, etc.)? Would it be okay if I stop by?

WORDS THAT CAN HURT

The following are a few of the potentially harmful comments that are often offered to children grieving the loss of a parent:

- I know just how you feel.
- I know just how you feel...my dog died last year.
- Lick your wounds and move on.
- You'll get over it.
- It will be okay.
- Don't think about it.
- You are better off without him.
- Don't cry.
- It's your fault.
- You drove your father to drink.
- If only you had _____.
- Tears won't bring her back.
- Be strong.
- Forget about it.
- You are the man/woman of the house now.
- You **should feel**....(proud, relieved, happy, sad, etc.)