



Trauma Intervention Programs of San Diego

## HELPING CHILDREN GRIEVE

1 | Reassure the child that he/she will be taken care of, loved, and cherished as before. The greatest fear of the bereaved child is that of being abandoned and deserted.

- Touch, hold and hug the child. Non-verbal communication is the most powerful and direct way of telling the child that you care.

2 | Explain to the child that the parent did not intend to die nor did the parent want to die. The child needs to be assured that his or her parent did not intentionally desert the child.

3 | Explain it was not the child's fault that the parent died. Young children often believe they possess magic power, and through the power of such thought the child actually brought about his parent's death. The child may need help to relieve this burden of guilt.

4 | Encourage the child to ask questions about anything that is on his or her mind. Do this on many occasions.

- Answer the child's questions simply, directly, and honestly. Children are quick to sense deceptions and may come to distrust adults.

5 | Allow the child the option of participating in the funeral. Describe the proceedings in detail beforehand. The funeral has an important cultural, religious, and therapeutic function for the family and the child is a member of that family.

6 | Be tolerant. It is normal for a child confronting a major crisis to regress to levels below his present level of maturity.

7 | Encourage the child to express his or her feelings and thoughts.



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### ***BOOKS TO HELP CHILDREN GRIEVE***

**Aliki. The Two of Them**

Called "A Poem of a Picture Book." The author captures true lasting love of a grandparent and a child on the markings of time - of life and death. A poem of meaning for adults and children to share together.

**Blackburn, Lynn. Timothy Duck**

A picture book for children about the death of a friend.

**Blume, Judy. Tiger Eyes**

Davey can't believe that her father has been shot to death in a hold-up at his 7-Eleven store. With her mother near collapse and her brother, Jason, too young to understand, Davey struggles to cope with her loss. After her family moves to New Mexico, she finds a private place in which she can begin to rebuild her life.

**Brown, Margaret Wise. The Dead Bird**

Easy reading picture-book about young children finding a dead bird - "but it had not been dead long." The story relates how the children plan and carry out the ritual of the burial and their feelings of sorrow toward the experience. Good example of mourning through example.

**Buchanan-Smith, Doris. A Taste of Blackberries**

A novel for children about how a young boy copes with the death of his friend. Also available on filmstrip.

**Buscaglia, Leo. The Fall of Freddie the Leaf**

The story of life, death, and the changing seasons of life. With color photographs. Should be read with the child and used as a vehicle for discussion.

**Carrick, Carol. The Accident**

When the dog, Badger, is killed by a truck, young Christopher must deal with his feelings of guilt, anger, and sadness. He comes to realize, however, that memories can be joyful.

**DePaula, Tomie. Nana Upstairs, and Nana Downstairs**



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Told in simple language and very readable to pre-schoolers and primary grade children. This is a picture example of caring for and looking after the very old. When death comes, a little boy learns its meaning.

**Dodd, R. Helping Children Cope with Death**

A sensitive booklet written for adults. It provides guidelines for helping children cope with their feelings of death and grief.

**Fassler, Joan. My Grandpa Died Today**

Easy reading for ages 8 and 9. The story of a boy experiencing the death of his grandfather.

**Grollman, Earl. Talking About Death: A Dialogue Between Parent and Child**

Written for children with illustrations. Includes a detailed parents' guide to help initiate discussion of the meaning of death.

**Hazen, B.S. Why Did Grandpa Die?**

A Golden picture-book about death which helps to open avenues of communication with children.

**Jackson, Edgar N. Telling A Child About Death**

For adults. Discusses how, when, and what to tell children about death.

**Kloeppel, Darlene. Sam's Grandma**

A coloring book about the death and funeral of a boy's grandmother.

**Krementz, Jill. How it Feels when a Parent Dies**

A sensitive presentation of eighteen interviews with bereaved children 8 to 12. Photographs and commentary.

**LaTour, Kathy. For Those Who Live**

A book about sibling death. Suitable for children and parents.

**LeShan, Eda. Learning to Say Goodbye**

A book for adults to explain how children grieve. An older child might also benefit from it.



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**Linn, Erin. Children are not Paper Dolls**

Drawings depicting the feelings of bereaved children and their comments. The book is suitable for children, parents, and professionals.

**Mann, Peggy. There are Two Kinds of Terrible**

A very readable story for adolescents. A moving account of how a young boy faces the death of his mother and learns to relate to his deeply grieving father.

**Mellonie, Bryan, and Ingpen, Robert. Lifetimes**

Explains life and death in a caring and sensitive way. It tells about plants, animals, and people all having a lifetime. It helps a child understand that life and death are both natural things and are part of the life cycle.

**Scribani, Mark. Love, Mark**

A series of letters written for children and adults. Each handwritten letter discusses various aspects of death and grief.

**Stein, Sarah B. About Dying**

One of the outstanding "open family books" for parents and children to read together. Suggestions for parents in helping a child understand and cope with death are included side-by-side with a large print text for children. The story begins with the death of a bird, moves to a grandfather who dies, and ends with a discussion of how to grow from these events.

**Viorst, Judith. The Tenth Good Thing About Barney**

A well-illustrated story for children about the death and burial of a cat. For children ages 5 to 10.