

# CHILDREN AND GRIEF

## Helping Children Cope With Grief

(adapted from Carla Goette, Chattanooga Funeral Home)

- Be available.
- Face your own feelings of loss and grief.
- Be open and honest with feelings. Create an atmosphere of open acceptance that invites questions and fosters confidence and love.
- Encourage expressions of grief (talking, writing, painting, yelling, etc.)
- Listen with your ears, eyes, and heart.
- Touch. This often “says” more than words. Touch can say, “I know what happened and I care. I am here if you need me.”
- Do not isolate or insulate children from grief. Grief is a normal and natural reaction to loss of any kind.
- Acknowledge the reality that grief hurts. Do not attempt to rescue the child (or yourself) from hurt. Work through the pain.
- Respect a child’s need to grieve. Almost anything can trigger grief.
- Realize that grief causes difficulty in concentrating. Children often experience a shortened attention span. Schoolwork is often affected.
- Set realistic goals with children concerning their behavior, school performance, and homework. Help children create their own routines if necessary.
- Maintain a daily routine if at all possible. Continuity becomes a safety net for grieving children. The continuity of attending school daily, being required to perform certain tasks in and out of school, and having a social routine provides children with some security and sense of stability in a topsy-turvy world.
- Make sure you have resources available about grief, loss, and change, to share with the child. Continue to be available long after you think they should be over it.
- Understand that children will continue to deal with the losses/changes they experience as they grow and mature. They will not get over it, but they can learn to grow through the grief and discover that love never goes away.