

Basic Ideas - Child Grief

It is important that the parent or guardian understand these "first principles."

1. **Children grieve.** Sometimes a parent is so lost in his or her own grief that the grief of a child is unnoticed or unappreciated.
2. **Children grieve for a long time.** The loss of a parent is not something a child can get over in a hurry.
3. **Children should be told about the death immediately.** Usually the news should come from the surviving parent.
4. **A child's loss is different.** The surviving parent lost a partner, companion, friend, and lover. The child lost a nurturer, protector, teacher, and role model. Thus the child will respond in different ways and have different needs.
5. **A child needs the surviving parent as a role model.** Even though the loss experienced by parent and child is different, the parent can set a very helpful example by the way he or she responds to the death. An open expression of thoughts and feelings is usually helpful.
6. **A child cannot carry the parent's grief.** Although the child needs to see the parent's grief, the child should not be expected to bear the parent's burden or in some way act as a substitute for one who has died.
7. **Young children often have three basic questions.** The parent must be sensitive to these questions and respond to them:
 - Did I cause this death to happen?
 - Will this eventually happen to me?
 - Who will take care of me now?