

## *Counseling Your Child Through Grief and Loss*

When discussing grief and loss with a child, it is difficult to know what to say or do. Here are some guidelines that can help guide your conversations.

**Each person will grieve differently.** It is important to recognize that every person will go through the five grief stages differently (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance). You may notice that your child is verbal and will need significant time to discuss thoughts, questions, and feelings, but others may be more withdrawn and quiet. Allow your child to respond in their own way.

**Be prepared to share your biblical beliefs of death.** Your child is developing his or her beliefs about death, its causes, and an eternal perspective. Sharing biblical explanations of why death happens, how death is conquered by Christ, and what happens after death will play an instrumental role in helping your child through the grieving process.

**Prioritize one on one time with your children.** Touch, attention, and one-on-one conversation is essential to aid in alleviating intense emotion. Taking a break from busy schedules and giving your child time to grieve will promote healthy grief.

**Allow them to ask questions.** It is not uncommon or unhealthy for your child to ask questions about the nature of a loss, death, or illness. Sharing information with your child is beneficial to their grief and development of beliefs. If your child is currently experiencing grief, share with them what to expect and what vocabulary they may hear (funeral, casket, burial, etc.)

**Express emotions verbally and creatively.** Communicate that God created emotions and they are good. Allow your child to experience and express each emotion he or she has. Allowing your child to express this emotion creatively (journaling, drawing, or singing), in addition to verbally can be therapeutic.

**Model genuine grief and healthy emotions.** Encourage your child to grieve. Share your own grief experiences with your child, what it was like, and what helped.

**Avoid euphemisms.** Avoiding euphemisms such as “passed away,” “sleeping,” and “isn’t with us,” and using actual vocabulary such as “died” and “death.”

If you have a concern or questions regarding grief and loss, we are available to meet with you and your child.

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PBS Counselors