

Tips for Parents

Here are some ideas for how you might support your children:

- This event might bring up questions, concerns or fears for your child.
- Be sensitive about whether s/he wants or needs to talk.
- Bring it up in case s/he is reluctant to do so.
- Ask about his/her reactions to this, and **accept those feelings as stated!** Resist the temptation to minimize the pain, deny the feelings or give advice. **Simply listen!**

Helpful responses on your part:

- "Tell me more about that."
- "Have you ever felt that way before?"
- "I wonder if there are other things that are worrying you?"
- Be concrete and brief in your answers, especially with younger children. Allow some silence and processing time after a statement.
- **Do not compare death with sleep or any other state of consciousness.** Sleep is a regenerative process necessary to health. Death is the loss of all life and regenerative processes. Kids often end up sleep deprived because of fear that they'll die, too, if we use this comparison.
- Allow for regressive behaviors.
- Be especially emotionally available and nonjudgmental.
- Realize that kids move in and out of the grief process, but it is very intense for them when they're experiencing the sadness / anxiety / fear. Encourage them to go out and have fun, get noisy, be active, and celebrate life in whatever way they can. Those periods of reprieve are important in sustaining health and in recovery. Allow them to move in and out of grieving at their own pace.
- Remember the importance of humor, laughter, joking.

**(Adapted from Crisis Management Institute)*
