



**GriefCare for Families**  
**Module 4: Caregiving after a loss**  
**Topic 4: Helping grieving children think about the future**

It will help your child to see that when someone special dies things change, but that doesn't mean it's not ok. In the beginning the changes can feel strange and confusing, but you and your child can get used to them and find ways to be happy. Your family will continue to be ok and there are a lot of things that will remain normal.

Children need to have comforting feelings about the future and the good things it holds for them. However, they will need help and guidance in imagining the future. A child needs a caregiver who can help them envision and create a meaningful future with possibilities for happiness. Children can also benefit from maintaining a sense of connection to the deceased person and it's important for them to be included in things you do to honor the person who died. However, this may be more about teaching them values and less about feelings of safety and support. What is more important for a child is maintaining a sense of security and normalcy in a world in which their friend or family member is no longer present.

When someone special dies, you may feel that you have lost your future. If so, your child will likely sense that. In order to help your child, you need to envision a life moving forward that has a sense of purpose, meaning and possibilities for joy and satisfaction.

People who are grieving intensely can begin to think about how their lives can move forward in a positive way. You might ask yourself the question, "what do I want for myself in a world without my loved one?" Parents need to feel comfortable thinking about the future in this way. If you notice that you are having trouble with this, see if you can analyze it. Are you feeling survivor guilt? Does it feel somehow wrong for you to enjoy your life? If so, please practice self-compassion and remind yourself that you are not helping your deceased loved one by depriving yourself and your children.

Like adults, it's important for children to start to envision their lives moving forward in a positive way. It's important for them to have things to look forward to, just as they did before this loss. As a caregiver, you can help your child look forward to things in different ways. You can do this by talking about their future, by thinking of vacation plans, things they want to learn or do, places they want to go, or people they want to be with.

It will help your family if you find ways to keep lines of communication open and continue to discuss what is painful, as well as what you are looking forward to. This may be difficult if you are experiencing intense grief yourself. If so, this is another reason to find your way to feeling comfortable with your own grief. It will find its place and know grief will move around over time. If grief continues to be intense, you can still find times when you set it aside. You can remind yourself that your loved one would want you to do this and that your child needs you to do it.