



GriefCare for Families
Module 4: Caregiving after a loss
Topic 5: Helping grieving children connect with memories

Children's relationships are different from adults. Children are still learning how to form and maintain connections with different people in their lives. Children need to be more flexible and resilient about their relationships because their safety depends upon having someone in their lives who can take care of them and give them a feeling of belonging.

What a child needs is to know that there is someone who is alive who can continue to take care of them. This can make children feel less need for an ongoing relationship with a special person who dies. However, they will continue to miss their deceased friend or family member and the intensity and shape of their grief will change as they grow and develop and experience important life events.

It will help your child if you support them in maintaining a connection to the person who died. For example, you might look at pictures together, tell stories about the person, recall things you did together, talk about what you loved about the person – even some of the things you did not love so much. Sharing these memories can help the whole family feel a continuing bond with your deceased loved one.

You might engage in other activities to honor the person who died. For example, singing songs, drawing or painting, sculpting things, playing games or celebrating things your deceased friend or family member loved can all be ways of honoring and remembering the person who died in a realistic way.

Parents and caregivers might use this opportunity to remind children how sad it is that this person is not coming back. Even though that is very sad, it helps to have these warm, positive memories. Engaging in activities to honor the person who died can give children the experience of staying connected with the loving memories even though the person is deceased.