



GriefCare for Families
Module 5: Caregiving after a loss
Topic 4: Supporting grieving children and their friends

Children's lives involve peers, including their friends. It's often hard for everyone – your child and their friends – to know how to be together after a loss. Often adults don't know what to say, and children don't either. The most important way you can help is by encouraging and supporting your child to maintain their relationships. You might suggest they invite a close friend over after school and then sit and talk with the children for a while. You can model ways to talk about the death and then set it aside. You can show your children that you can allow this sad reality to be in your life and you can still think about and do other things. Your children can continue to enjoy having fun and being with friends and family.

Sometimes other children make insensitive hurtful comments or they ask awkward questions. You might want to help your child understand that these children don't necessarily have harmful intent. This may be an opportunity to educate the person. You might come up with ways to answer some difficult questions or comments and help your child practice saying them.

Friends are an important part of your child's life. You can let them know that this is not something that needs to change. Being together more, rather than less, will help your child and others become more comfortable together. Your child might also benefit from going to a group with other bereaved children. There are some outstanding centers across the US and elsewhere that provide grief support for children. Your child can meet new friends and share experiences with other children who have also experienced a loss. There are also organizations that offer grief camps. This experience can be very enriching and positive for a bereaved child.