



GriefCare for Families
Module 5: Caregiving after a loss
Topic 5: Supporting grieving children in school

Grieving children need to return to school and they often want to do this. They want their lives to be normal, to not stand out and to have consistent relationships with other children. Adults, including teachers, principals, relatives and family friends are also important to a grieving child. However, children and adults are not always as helpful as we would like.

Parents and caregivers know school is not always easy. You may have a lot of worries about being away from your children. You may worry about how they are doing and how others will treat them. You can help by making sure that the school is aware of your family's loss. You might consider talking with the principal, teachers, and school counselor. You might want to include your child in discussions about these plans.

It is important to acknowledge and communicate to your child the fact that grief can make it harder to do things the way you usually do. Let them know that feelings can be triggered that are hard to manage. It might be harder to concentrate on school work and harder to interact with others. Parents and caregivers can watch for signs that a child is having a hard time with their grief, and can ask school administrators and teachers to be attentive to the child's experience, as well. You might want to talk about questions people might ask or things they might say that might be upsetting. You can make plans for what your child will do if this happens.

You want to be prepared for difficulties at school. You want school administrators and teachers to be prepared and you want your child to be prepared. You also want to acknowledge how helpful it can be to have others around and to have a structured routine. School can be challenging. It can also be satisfying and fun. You want to be sure to acknowledge this too! You want to talk with your child about what has gone well at school, not just about what is a problem.