



GriefCare for Families
Module 5: Caregiving after a loss
Topic 6: Helping grieving children by setting limits

You can help your child by keeping the usual routines and structure of your household as constant as possible and by setting and respecting limits. You may be feeling that your children are going through enough pain and want to lessen their burden. This is a very natural and understandable impulse but it may not be the best thing for your child. Children often thrive when provided structure and routine.

It's important to maintain age-appropriate responsibilities for contributing to the household. Expectations of your children to do this should not be changed because of the loss. It might be important for everyone in the family to do additional tasks. Parents and caregivers do not need to be the only ones to fill in if there are new things to do. Having expectations that are clear, manageable and appropriate for children helps them feel a sense of normalcy and purpose. Having everyone contribute to maintaining the home may make it easier to find time to talk and play together.

It's also important to maintain limits on negative behavior. Continue to be patient and understanding, while being consistent with reasonable expectations. You may need to tolerate an increase in behavior you find annoying or obnoxious. If you notice this is happening you might want to take some time to talk about the death and acknowledge that the loss can make you or your child sad, mad or scared. Continue to remind your child that it's going to be ok. Behavior that is dangerous or destructive needs to immediately be addressed, even if it is clearly related to intense painful feelings about the loss.