

How do I support a grieving child/young person?

Do:

- provide a safe space and be patient
- have a regular routine, be consistent
- include and involve the child in appropriate decision making and in what is happening
- acknowledge feelings and give support when they are overwhelming
- provide opportunities share memories of the person that has died, create a memory book or journey, draw, paint, write stories, poems or collect photos
- prepare for special occasions – birthdays, Mother's day, Father's day, start of school, etc.
- give comfort, hugs and reassurance
- prepare them for any further change that may be approaching
- make time for just being together, take time out, re-establish recreational activities and outings as soon as you can.
- sit quietly with the young person while they talk, cry or are silent
- reassure the person that grief is a normal and there is no wrong/right way to grieve
- use language that is familiar, easily understood and comfortable for you both.
- be honest and reassuring: use the words 'dead' or 'death'
- give adequate and age appropriate information
- be available to listen and assist with any concerns your child may have
- validate for them that this can be a confusing time for adults as well as children.

Don't:

- put a limit on the process of healing. Be available some time down the track
- panic in the absence or presence of strong emotional responses
- ignore or neglect your own grief and/or feeling of helplessness
- be judgemental with their views, responses, or what they say
- use 'committed suicide' or euphemisms such as 'sleeping forever' or 'left us...' - these phrases cause confusion for children
- answer their questions with unnecessary details or long-winded explanations.