

HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AFTER SUICIDE LOSS (PG 1 OF 2)

It can be hard to know how to support children after the death of someone they know and love, especially when that loss is by suicide. The complex emotions and unanswered questions surrounding suicide can make it even harder for children to process and cope. Understanding their needs and providing compassionate, age-appropriate support is key. Here are some tips to help guide you in supporting children during this challenging time:

Choose a safe and quiet space

Find a quiet environment where the child feels safe and is able to speak freely without interruptions.

Use empathy

Acknowledge and validate the child's emotions. Let them know it's OK to feel sad, confused, or angry, and encourage them to express their feelings openly.

Offer reassurance

Assure the child they are not responsible for the death and couldn't have prevented it. Reinforce your love, support, and the availability of help whenever they need it.

Encourage open dialogue

Let the child know it's OK to ask questions and that you'll answer them honestly, offering clarity without overwhelming them.

Maintain normalcy

Stick to regular routines to provide stability. This can help the child feel secure during a time of emotional upheaval.

Seek professional support

Consider counseling or therapy for ongoing emotional support, especially from professionals experienced in grief and trauma. It's important to connect with someone who can help the child process their feelings.

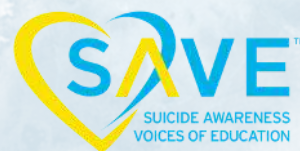
Keep monitoring their emotional health

Stay attuned to the child's emotional well-being and be ready to revisit the conversation or provide extra support as needed. Ensure they know it's OK to ask for help anytime.

Encourage mental health resources

If you or the child is struggling with grief or suicidal thoughts, reach out to mental health professionals immediately. Call 988 for crisis support.

Grief and trauma are unique to each person, so professional guidance can be critical in ensuring children receive the support most appropriate for them.



HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AFTER SUICIDE LOSS (PG 2 OF 2)

How to talk to children after suicide loss

After the suicide of a loved one, parents often wonder, "What should I tell my kids?" The answer is the truth, regardless of how difficult it may be. Discussing a suicide death with children can be a delicate matter. Approach the conversation with sensitivity, honesty, and age-appropriate language. Here are some general guidelines you may follow:

Be honest, yet age-appropriate.

- Use simple, clear language that fits the child's age and developmental level so they can think about death in a way that makes sense to them. Children of different ages have varying cognitive and emotional abilities, so tailoring the language helps avoid confusion or unnecessary fear.
- Be honest, but avoid graphic details.
- Stick to the facts and provide reassurance.

Using empathy can sound like the following:

- **Child:** "I'm sad because I don't get why Grandma is gone. I miss her and I don't know why this had to happen."
- **Adult:** "I'm sorry you're feeling this way. It's so hard when someone we love isn't here anymore, and it's completely OK to feel sad and confused about it."
- Empathy allows adults to acknowledge and validate the child's feelings of confusion, sadness, or fear, which helps them feel understood and less alone in their grief. It creates a safe, non-judgmental space where children feel comfortable expressing their emotions and asking questions. Empathy fosters trust, showing the child that their emotional experience is respected, and that it's OK to feel upset or angry.

Offering reassurance can sound like this:

- **Child:** "Maybe if I had been nicer or did things differently, [person] wouldn't have left. I feel like it's my fault."
- **Adult:** "I'm so sorry you're feeling that way, but I want you to know that this is not your fault at all."
- Children may feel confused, guilty, or scared, and reassurance helps alleviate these feelings by affirming that the death was not their fault. Offering reassurance to children after a suicide death is crucial because it helps them process the trauma in a safe and supportive way. Assure them of your love and support, and encourage them to share their feelings.

Open dialogue can sound like this:

- **Adult:** "I know this is a tough time, and you might have a lot of questions about [person] dying. If you want to talk about or ask anything, I'm here to listen and try to answer as best I can."
- **Child:** "Will they ever come back?"
- **Adult:** "I know you wish that could happen, but unfortunately, they won't. It's OK to feel sad or confused about that. What else are you wondering?"
- Open dialogue about death is important for children as it reduces fear and anxiety. Having open dialogue strengthens trust between caregivers and children and corrects any misconceptions.