

As an adult, be a good observer. See how each child is behaving. Don't rush in with explanations. Usually, it's more helpful to ask exploring questions than to give quick answers.

When someone loved dies, don't expect children's reactions to be obvious and immediate. Be patient and be available.

Children are part of the family, too. And reassurance comes from the presence of loving, people. Children feel secure in the care of gentle arms and tenderness.

When describing death of someone loved to a child, use simple and direct language.

Be honest. Express your own feelings regarding the death. By doing so, children have a model for expressing their own feelings. It's all right to cry too.

Allow children to express a full range of feelings. Anger, guilt, despair and protest are natural reactions to the death of someone loved.

Listen to children, don't just talk to them.

No one procedure or formula will fit all children, either at the time of death or during the months that follow. Be patient, flexible and adjust to individual needs.

Adults must recognize their own personal feelings about death. Until they consciously explore their own concerns, doubts and fears about death, it will be difficult to support children when someone loved dies.

*“If handled with warmth and understanding, a child's early experience with the death of someone loved can be an opportunity to learn about life and living as well as death and dying.”*

*Dr. Alan D. Wolfelt - Center for Loss and Life Transition*