THE village
FAMILY SERVICE CENTER
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
November 2026

Keeping in touch

SUPPORTING CHILDREN THROUGH GRIEF

AFTER A DEATH FROM ILLNESS

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When a child experiences the death of someone they know due to an illness, they may feel sadness, anger, confusion, fear, or uncertainty. Open, honest conversations can help children understand what happened and feel supported throughout the grieving process. A child's age and developmental level are important considerations when discussing death, as they influence how children understand and respond to loss.

Grief is a personal experience, and every child processes loss differently. Emotions may change quickly, and children may express their feelings in various ways. Encourage children to ask questions and share their emotions in a safe, supportive environment where they feel heard and accepted. Remind them that there is no right or wrong way to grieve and that their experience may differ from their peers.

When a death occurs within a child's school or community, additional resources may be helpful. Age-appropriate educational materials and school counseling services* can provide support based on each child's needs. Some children may benefit from regular conversations with trusted adults, while others may also need professional support*.

In addition to navigating grief, children may have questions about the illness itself, especially when they do not fully understand what caused the death. Providing honest, clear, and age-appropriate explanations can help reduce confusion. Parents and caregivers can acknowledge their own feelings, demonstrating that it is okay to experience sadness and discuss difficult emotions.

Questions about illness may be especially challenging for younger children, who often think in concrete terms and may worry that they or someone they love could become sick and die. Listen to their concerns, offer reassurance, and explain the illness in simple terms without making promises that cannot be guaranteed. Focus on helping children feel safe and supported in the present.

Above all, children need patience, honesty, and understanding as they navigate grief. Keeping communication open, allowing space for emotions, and seeking additional support when needed can help children feel less alone as they cope with the loss of someone important to them.

*These are additional resources from The Village and may not be available through the EAP.



"Keeping in Touch" is a monthly publication for employees covered by The Village Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through their employer's benefit package. If you have questions about your EAP benefit, or if you would like to access services, call **1-800-627-8220**.