



Children and Grief

The death of a parent, sibling or loved one can be a traumatic experience for a child that, if not addressed properly, can contribute to a lifetime of pain and emotional hardship. As parents, teachers, counselors, and trusted caregivers, we often struggle to understand how a child experiences grief and what we can do to support them.

After a traumatic event, it is essential for trusted adults to honestly explain what happened, help children discuss their emotions, listen actively, and offer support them as they navigate their unique grieving experiences and emotional responses.

Fast Facts

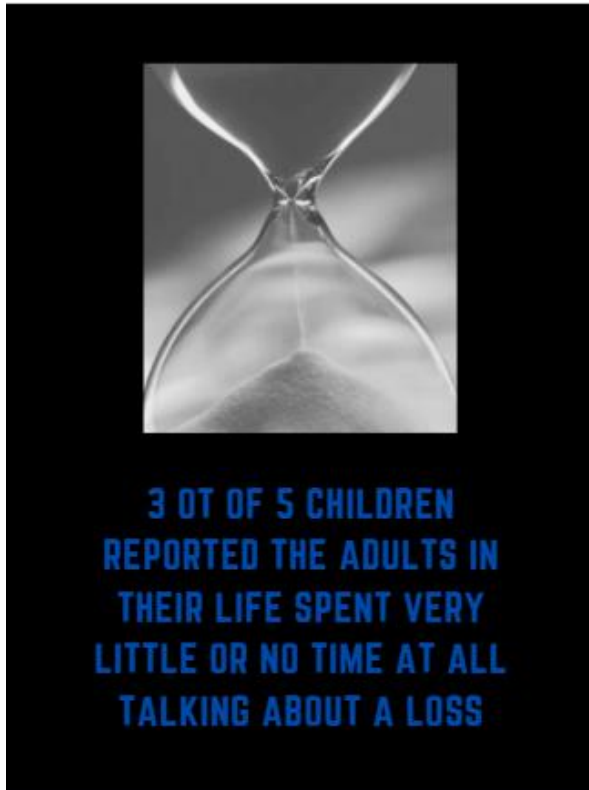
CHILDHOOD LOSS



**IN 2018 1 IN 14 CHILDREN
UNDER 18 LOST A PARENT OR
SIBLING**



**2 OUT OF 5 CHILDREN
SURVEYED EXHIBITED SIGNS
OF MILD TO SEVERE
DEPRESSION WITHIN A MONTH
AFTER LOSING A LOVED ONE**



Strategies to Help Children with Grief



A child's grieving process will be unique to them and their relationship with the person they lost. There is no one sized-fits-all approach that will help all children, however, Dr. Ivana Sport from the St. Karayont institute says that there are actions adults can take to help children cope with and express their grief.



1. **Honestly Discuss What Happened-** Adults need to discuss the loss with children honestly. Children need to understand that the loved one has gone and will not be coming back. This nature of discussion will vary based on the child's age and level of comprehension.



- 2. Provide Opportunities For Closure-** This includes allowing the child to attend the person's funeral if they are willing or if it would be appropriate. If the child does not attend the funeral, you can help them find a way to say goodbye to the person they lost, by visiting the grave after the burial, drawing a picture of the person, or having time to talk about how much they love and miss them.



- 3. Listen Actively Without Judgement-** Not all children express grief in the same way, therefore many children's responses to a loved one's passing may not resemble our expectations of grief. A child might not seem sad or may avoid talking about the person they lost. When adults actively listen to what a child says, they can gain insight into how the child is responding to the loss and offer the necessary support.



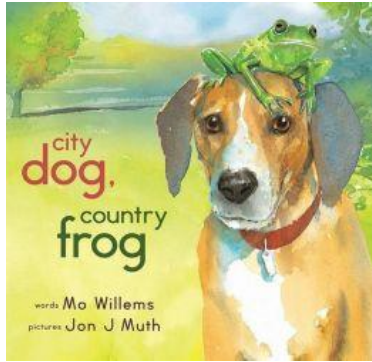
4. **Establish and Maintain an Active Presence in the Child's Life-** The passing of an important person represents a major traumatic change for the child, and they will need the reassuring presence of a trusted adult to navigate their emotions and discuss the loss. Allow children to discuss the person who passed and how it made them feel. If children lose someone who they spent a lot of time with, try to fill that void by reminding the child that you are there and care about them. Make it clear that you are not trying to replace the person they lost but that they are not alone and always will have a trusted adult.

Resources

Online Read Alouds

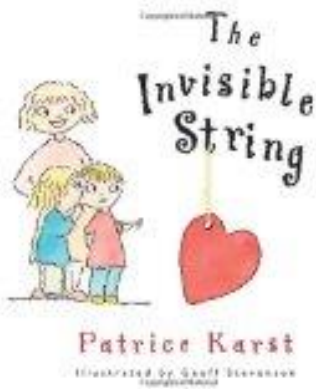
Below are some online read videos of children's book that address the topic of loss.

City Dog, Country Frog by Mo Willems



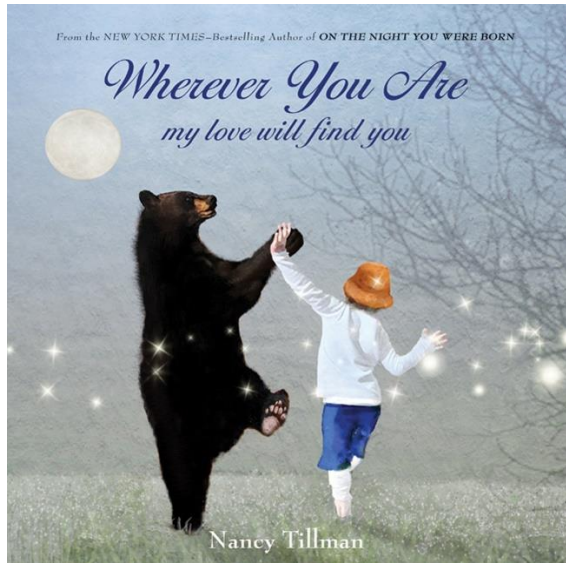
[City Dog, Country Frog Read Aloud - YouTube](#)

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst & Joanne Lew-Vriethoff



[The Invisible String - YouTube](#)

Wherever You Are My Love Will Find You by Nancy Tillman



[Wherever You Are My Love Will Find You by Nancy Tillman - YouTube](#)

Actual Citations

[The Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model \(CBEM\) | Eluna Network](#)