



PATHWAYS CENTER *for* GRIEF & LOSS

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SUPPORT AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT OR SUDDEN DEATH: SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

The moment a tragedy occurs, it has ripple effects that can be surprisingly far-reaching. The closer one is to the situation when it happened, the greater the impact it will have. The best way as adults to help children is to encourage them to express their feelings, worries and questions.

- Maintain routines to foster a sense of security and reassurance.
- Identify a time or place during your child's daily routine to talk.
- Consider the age of your child and where he or she is developmentally.
- Provide simple answers, short descriptions, and listen for their questions.
- Particularly with younger children, be prepared to hear the same questions over and over. They are trying to grasp and understand what this is all about.
- Avoid nonessential separations at this time; it can increase apprehension and distress.
- Maintain discipline and whatever family rules you usually have.
- Even teens, despite their need for independence, need reassurance and a sense of safety.
- Remember that feelings of anxiety can resurface. New questions can arise when this happens.

In the many different ways you support your child and help them know they can come to you with their questions and concerns, you are helping them cope with a difficult experience. Know too that usually when a child is affected by crisis or loss, you as an adult are also stressed and affected. Coping in times of crisis or sudden death can be physically and emotionally exhausting. Take care of yourself and obtain the support you need too. If you would like more information or support call a local hospice provider. Most hospice bereavement programs don't just serve hospice bereaved, they support anyone in the community who is impacted by loss from death.