

Don'ts

Explain death by using vague terms such as "sleeping" or "travelling abroad". It may lead to misunderstanding or even fear of sleeping or travelling.

Blame them in the name of the deceased, saying "You are so naughty. It's no wonder your mum couldn't stand you!", or "You are so lazy. I feel sorry for your dad".

Avoid making contact with the children due to your own grief.

Prohibit children's attendance of the funeral, believing that this is a way to "shield" them from unpleasant or traumatic memory.

Pretend to be strong in front of the children, leading them to believe that they need to suppress their feelings as well.

Ignore their questions and feelings due to the misbelief that children do not experience distress.

Underestimate the importance of acknowledging and handling grief properly or having support around you.

- If children's grief persists and significantly affects their everyday life, please seek help from professionals (such as clinical psychologists, social workers, counsellors or doctors).

Hospital Authority Task Force on Disaster Psychosocial Services

Contact us:

Corporate Clinical Psychology Services,
Hospital Authority

Address: 1/F, Centre for Health Protection,
147C Argyle Street, Kowloon

☎ 2300 8619

☎ 2713 6229

✉ clinpsyservices@ha.org.hk

🌐 <http://www.ha.org.hk/oasis>



For more disaster-related psycho-educational resources, please visit
<https://hadps.ha.org.hk/>.



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AUTHORITY



Children and Grief

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Children grieve as well. Just like adults, if their loved one passes away, they will go through different emotional and behavioral reactions, which vary among people.



Children before School Age:

- Show anxiety especially when they are separated from their carer. They lack a sense of security, and are over-dependent and unwilling to sleep alone. When their carer is away, they may cry very easily.
- Sleep is often disturbed and accompanied by nightmares.
- Are unable to understand the permanency of death. As a result, they may keep inquiring about death or the deceased.
- May show signs of regression in behavior, e.g. fear of loneliness/ darkness or bed-wetting.
- May become quiet and withdrawn or unwilling to speak.
- May resist changes in life and see them as threats.

Children at School Age:

- May hide their own emotions and refrain from asking questions related to the deceased, out of fear of making others upset.
- May feel guilty as they believe the death of their loved one is their fault.
- May have trouble concentrating, resulting in reduced academic performance.
- May become socially withdrawn and reluctant to participate in school activities.
- May have a drastic change in temperament and behavior.

Ways to help children cope with grief:

Do's

