

Grief and children

The death of a friend or family member is difficult for anyone. How kids respond depends greatly on their age, experiences, and personality. And when a peer dies, kids may be afraid that something similar could happen to them.

Your child may be feeling depressed, angry, confused, anxious, or any number of emotions. Be honest with him/her and encourage questions. This can be hard because you may not have all the answers and the subject is difficult for everyone to talk about, but it's important to create an atmosphere of comfort and openness, and to convey that there's no single "right" way to feel or grieve.

Your child might find it helpful to hear you express your feelings on his/her friend's death. Give them the opportunity to express their feelings and recognize that anxiety and sadness are perfectly normal. You might also share any spiritual beliefs you have about death with him/her.

If symptoms of grief continue beyond a few weeks or negatively affects other aspects of your child's life, consider seeking help from a professional like your child's doctor or school counselor.

For more information about grief, go to www.kidshealth.org.