

Grieving as a Family

Communication is the key to coping and growing as a family through grief. It is important to be together to talk, cry, and rage or even sit in silence. There should be respect for each member's way of handling grief. Some family members will grieve privately, others openly, and others a combination of these two styles.

Here are some suggestions to help with family grief.

- Expect that each family member will grieve in their own particular way and at their own particular pace. This may affect your ability to support one another.
- Even though you may be really focused on the death of one family member, remember that remaining family members continue to need your time, attention *and* love.
- Try to find a balance between what is missing and what is here.
- Try to be sensitive to each other's feelings. Feelings are often difficult to verbalize. Listen to what is meant *as well as* what *is* said.
- Hugs, a hand on the arm or back gives comfort and a *sense* of closeness.
- It may be helpful to set aside time to be "alone together" as a family or to even hold a family meeting. *Encourage* but don't pressure family members to talk. Respect that they *are* expressing their grief in their own way. Be careful not to give the silent treatment.
- Make sure that the person who died continues to be part of family conversations. Say their name, share stories/memories of them.
- Plan together for family projects or trips. A family diary or scrapbook in which each family member may contribute a writing or drawing can be a way to help you remember and talk about the family member who died.
- Remember, the life stages of family members' affects how they deal with their grief. So too, does their personality, life experiences and support systems.
- Discuss changes in family duties and roles for the survivors in the family. Don't expect another family member to replace or to be the same as the member who died. For example, expecting a young boy whose father died to be the "man of the house" or a daughter whose sibling died to be the same in schoolwork and sports may complicate their grieving.
- Recognize that anniversaries, birthdays *and* special holidays may be difficult for your family. Talk together about what you want to do on these occasions.
- Remember, if grief or family problems feel overwhelming, seek professional help.

Source Unknown