



Talking to Our Children About Grief

A Culturally-Responsive Guide for Relatives and Caregivers

What is Grief? Grief is a natural response to loss. For our children, grief may come after the death of a loved one, the loss of a pet, a change in family structure, or even community tragedies. Grief is not just sadness—it can be a mix of feelings that come in waves, and it can affect the mind, body, and spirit.

How Do Children Express Grief?

Children may not always express grief with words. Instead, they may show it through changes in behavior. Some children may seem unaffected at first but show signs later. **All of these reactions are valid.**

What Grief Might Look Like For Children:

- Withdrawing
- Acting out
- Having trouble sleeping
- Physical complaints like stomachaches.



What to Say

As Relatives, caregivers, and trusted adults, we can help children by creating a safe, loving space where they feel heard.

Use simple, honest language about death and loss. Let them ask questions, and don't be afraid to say "I don't know" when you don't have the answers. Remind them it's okay to feel sad, mad, or confused—and that they are not alone.

For Relatives living in Nebraska

All Nations Crisis Textline

Text "Support" to 33464 to chat with an All Nations team member.

We are here seven days a week from 8:00 AM - Midnight.

Healing With Culture and Connection

Incorporate cultural practices, stories, and ceremony when appropriate. These can be powerful ways to honor those who have passed and support healing. Encourage connection with Elders and trusted community members.



Validate their feelings, say things like "It's okay to feel that way."



Keep routines when possible, they provide a sense of safety.



Create space for expression through drawing, music, or storytelling.



Light a candle, say a prayer, or make an offering as a way to honor the person who passed.



Share your own feelings to model that it's okay to talk about grief.



Spend time in nature or engage in traditional practices that bring comfort.



Remind them often: they are loved, they are safe, and they are not alone.

Healing takes time. By holding our children up through their grief, we help them carry their loss with strength, love, and cultural roots.

Sources:
www.nnctc.org
www.nctsn.org/resources

society of care

