



formerly HospiceCare of Boulder & Broomfield Counties

COMMUNITYCARE

Hospice | Supportive Services

Anticipatory Grief in Children

Children often begin the grieving process before an actual death occurs. They begin missing the person that they used to have before that person became sick. As a person becomes sicker, children have to change and adapt to the new situation and develop new coping skills. As parents and caregivers, you are often grieving as well, and this makes it more difficult to help children with their grief. Children often do not have the ability to put their emotions into words so you may see changes in their behavior but may not connect those to grief.

- Give your child a chance to say goodbye in a way that feels good to them: draw a picture, write a letter, sit by the bedside. Art is healing.
- Children always do better when they are given the truth because they can ask questions and not create something worse with their imagination. Keep your facts simple.
- Let them ask questions, even the hard ones. Let them know all feelings are ok to feel as they grieve and it's normal to have many different feelings.
- Kids worry about how this death will impact them. Focus on keeping routines the same; don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Correct their ideas when they are not accurate: younger children often feel great guilt over a death. Always let them know why it is not their fault.
- Kids often say that they can't cry because that will make the adults sad, and adults say the same thing. Be open. Kids also worry about their own safety. "What will happen to me if my parents/caregivers also die?" Be reassuring.