

Do and Don't Ideas to Help Your Child Deal With Tragedy and Loss

- **Do** listen. Grieving children need a safe, trusted adult who will listen to them.
- **Do** answer the questions they ask, even the hard ones. Give them the information you feel they are developmentally ready to handle and just stick to the facts. The younger your child, the more “black and white” you may want to be.
- **Do** ask them how they feel and what they think. Do not assume you know.
- **Do** be willing to admit you don't know something or don't understand what happened.
- **Do** be honest and appropriate about your own feelings. However, it is not the time to tell your own story of hurt or loss. In a few weeks....maybe. Not right now.
- **Do** allow your child to initiate discussions concerning the situation.
- **Do** respect differences in grieving style
- **Do** follow routines. Routines provide a sense of safety which can be comforting to your child.
- **Do** limit your child's exposure to media and adult conversations concerning the situation.
- **Do** be aware that if there is recent loss, crisis, or conflict in the life of your child, this may be more difficult for them.
- **Do not** label their feelings as right or wrong, good or bad.
- **Do not** suggest that your child has grieved long enough.
- **Do not** indicate that your child should get over it and move on.
- **Do not** act as if nothing has happened.
- **Do not** say things like:
 - “I know how you feel.”
 - “You'll be stronger because of this.”
- **Do not** be surprised to see your child cycling through needing to talk about the situation. They may just need to play one moment and talk the next.
- **Do** be willing to seek help for your child if you are concerned about their response to the tragedy.