

HOW TO HELP CHILDREN HEAL AFTER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MURDER-SUICIDE

Many children will experience traumatic grief after losing their parents to a domestic violence murder-suicide. There are lots of ways new caregivers can help children heal. The following list of suggestions can support children in their healing journey.

CONNECT WITH A THERAPIST

Find a therapist who specializes in grief and trauma and works with children. Play therapists who use art and play to help children work through trauma and grief usually work best for younger children.

TALK TO SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

Let the school support staff know what's going on so that they can support the child(ren) during the school day and advocate for the child within the school system. A plan may need to be developed to tailor schoolwork assignments for children experiencing traumatic grief.

BE PATIENT

Understand that healing will take time. Talk about your own feelings and encourage children to talk about their feelings when they feel comfortable. Provide outlets such as art, play, and music.

DON'T FORCE OR LIMIT DISCUSSIONS

Allow children to talk as needed but do not force children to talk if they are not ready. If children are told not to talk and just move on, their trauma may freeze at that age.

NORMALIZE GRIEF REACTIONS

Do not force children to go places that make them upset or scared. Do not hide pictures or other reminders. However, be aware children may not be ready to see pictures. Understand that children with traumatic grief may be too sad or scared to talk about their good memories of their family for a while.

REPEATING AND REPROCESSING ARE NORMAL

You may have to explain death to young children more than once. Understand that children may reprocess trauma at each developmental stage. Continue to reassure them it was not their fault. Remind them of their support system and all the people who care about them. Reassure the child that it is okay to have all different kinds of feelings, including happiness.

KEEP LOVING BOUNDARIES

Children feel most secure when they know what to expect and what is expected from them. However, you may have to be flexible at times with children experiencing traumatic grief. Learn and discuss healthy coping strategies and always act in a way that is non-threatening and non-violent with them. Parenting class may help to establish and maintain loving boundaries.