

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP THEIR CHILDREN

- let them grieve in their own ways - they are different to adults
- try to understand how they are feeling, be patient, and if you can't be,
- make sure someone else is around to support them
- take them to the funeral, maybe even the viewing
- give them a special ritual if appropriate
- answer all their questions simply and honestly
- take time out if you need to, but make sure someone else is there to answer their questions and support them
- share your grief, don't try to hide it from children if they see you being emotional, not handling it, then they'll feel OK if they aren't handling it
- allow yourself to grieve, you don't have to be a martyr for everyone else, including your children.

REACHING OUT

If you want some help, or to just to talk things through a bit, you can contact your local Aboriginal health worker, priest, doctor or community service for assistance.

Contact Information:-

- Murray Mallee Community Health Centre,
Swanport Road, Murray Bridge
Ph: (08) 85356800

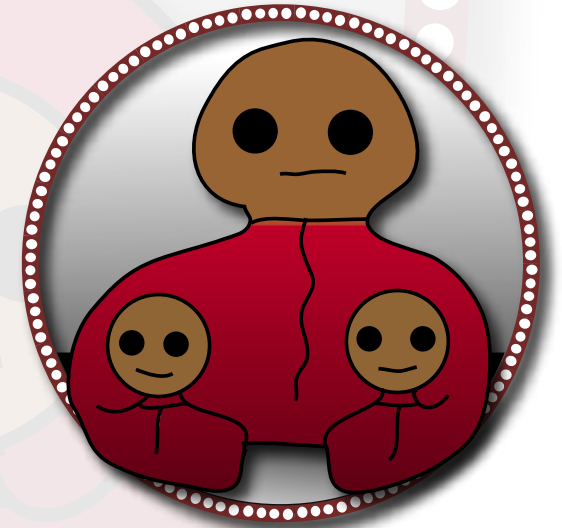
WHAT DO WE TELL THE CHILDREN?

WHEN SOMEONE DIES

This brochure was originally produced by The Rainbow Project - Helping with Grief and Trauma

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This new brochure has been redesigned by the Indigenous Substance Misuse Health Promotion Unit due to demand for the information.



INDIGENOUS
SUBSTANCE MISUSE
HEALTH PROMOTION UNIT.

TELL THEM THE TRUTH

When someone dies our children will also feel the pain of this loss but because they don't understand as much about how the world works they are likely to be more confused. They need our help especially at this difficult time. Our kids usually get to know about death when they are pretty young. With all their uncles and aunties and cousins and relations, they get used to people dying and going to funerals.

CHILDREN AND GRIEF

Kids grieve differently to older people. They are more likely to switch their grieving on and off because they can't cope with all those feelings all the time - so they take time out and go and watch TV or play. They're not being disrespectful they're just being kids.

We can help our kids better if we understand what they are likely to be thinking and feeling.

All kids should be allowed to go to the funeral, to see the body and to say goodbye in their own special ways. We might think we are protecting them by shielding them from death but everyone has to grieve - its how we get over a death and get on with living. If we don't involve the kids they'll just imagine lots of things about death and get a lot more scared and confused. We can help them by explaining what will happen at the funeral and answering all their questions.

CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

Most kids up to about five don't really understand that death is for good - they see cartoon characters on TV who jump off cliffs and come back to life.

At this age they are likely to be confused - they know something's happened because of all the people and the sadness around them. They'll probably feel sad but not really know why. So they'll ask lots of questions like "What does dead mean?"

To help them cope with death they need to have these questions answered honestly and simply. If you are too grief stricken to answer them, make sure someone else does.

CHILDREN FROM SIX TO TEN

From around six years of age, kids can react to death pretty much as adults do - they can be shocked, angry, blaming, depressed and feel guilty. But it's likely that they won't understand all their moods. They can be pretty hard to live with - seeming to be insensitive to how others are feeling. And sometimes they can be very interested in the physical aspects of death "What happens to the body?", "Why is he being buried?"

If the person who has died is someone special to the child, their grieving can be helped by giving them something special to do at the funeral or before - their own 'special' ritual as a way of saying goodbye.

CHILDREN OVER TEN

Over about ten, kids need to be treated pretty much as adults. Like us, they'll have some difficulties handling some of their feelings. Some teenagers bottle their feelings up inside and cut themselves off from parents. Sometimes relatives or friends can help them better than their parents. Its important not to force them to talk - just let them know you are there.

