

When a Parent Dies...

Losing a parent is the most profound loss a child can experience. It's important that the adults in their life support them during this time.

- Give the child the facts, gently but honestly.
- Reassure him or her that she will always be taken care of.
- Include children in the services, if they wish. Allow them to attend the funeral.
- Encourage children to express their feelings.
- Validate their grief--it's normal and necessary.
- Explore your beliefs about life after death.
- Watch for renewed grief on special occasions.
- Encourage the child to preserve his or her memories.
- Let healing happen through allowing the gift of supported grief.
- Love is what matters and lasts--hold on to love.
- Allow children to use outlets for getting their feelings out: through such things as playing sports, drawing or writing, listening to music.
- Make sure the child realizes that it's okay to play and be happy if he or she feels like it, that Mom or Dad would want it that way.
- Prepare the child in advance before holidays, birthday, or other special occasions. Let children know that we often feel the loss especially deeply at times like this. Make a plan of how the child will observe and plan some kind of special memorial ritual to honor their loved one's life.



Adapted from Hospice of McDowell County, Inc.

Promoting Healthy Social Behaviors in Child Care Centers