

## Local Resources

### Emporia Mental Health

1000 Lincoln St  
Emporia, KS  
(620) 343-2211

### ESU Community Counseling Services

1601 State Street  
Emporia KS 66801  
Phone: (620) 341-5799

### Local Ministerial Alliance

Bob Robison - 620-437-6699

### Christ First Counseling Center

2000 SW Gage Blvd  
Topeka, KS 66604  
(785) 272-0778  
(Services from them are available in Emporia.)



## When To Seek Professional Help for Your Child

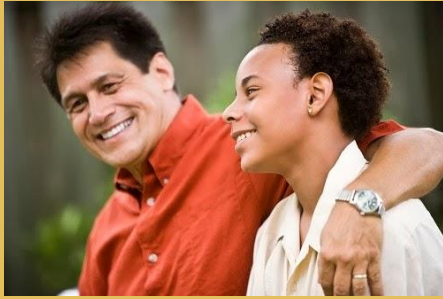
Watch for these behaviors. If they are consistent over a long period of time, they may need professional assistance. Local resources options are listed at left.

- If your child is experiencing multiple losses at one time.
- The symptoms of grief become significant and overwhelming, even after much time has passed.
- Using substances such as drugs or alcohol to cope with loss.
- Talking about suicide.
- Sleep deprivation.
- Low self-esteem.
- Academic failure or indifference to activities.
- Deterioration of relationships with friends and family.
- Denying pain while at the same time acting overly strong or mature. The result of not grieving can be damaging in the long term as well.

## Helping Your Child Cope With Grief

USD #386

*Symptoms of Grief  
Tips To Help Your Child  
When To Seek Professional Assistance  
Local Resources*



## A Caring Adult's Role

How adults respond when someone dies has a major effect on the way children react to death. Sometimes, adults do not want to talk about death, assuming that by doing so, children will be spared some of the pain and sadness. The reality is though, that children will grieve anyway.

Children need adults to confirm that it's alright to be sad and to cry, and that the hurt they feel now is normal. This will help them to not feel alone in their grief and know that they are supported.

*Encourage* them to ask questions if they have them. *Respond* to the child with sensitivity and warmth. *Accept* their feelings. *Share* your own experiences and beliefs about death to help them relate. *Listen* to your child and allow time for silence. Coming from their parent, a child will appreciate knowing if you have been through grief before.

With love and understanding, adults can guide children through this vulnerable time

## Symptoms of Grief

Grief can come in many different forms. The following list may help you to understand what your child may be experiencing.

All, keep in mind — all people grieve differently. Some people will wear their emotions on their sleeve and be outwardly emotional. Others will experience their grief more internally, and may not cry.

You should try and not judge *how* a person experiences their grief, as each person will experience it differently.

- **Denial and Isolation:** A person may deny the reality of the situation. It is a normal reaction to rationalize overwhelming emotions.
- **Anger:** Anger may be directed at our dying or deceased loved one. Rationally, we know the person is not to be blamed. Emotionally, however, we may resent the person for causing us pain or for leaving us.
- **Sadness:** A depressed mood or loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed.
- **Acceptance:** A peace and understanding about the loss. It is not an end to being sad, nor is this happiness of the loss.

## Tips to Help Your Child

- “I know what has happened and I know it might be hard for you. I am here to listen or talk. It is important that we talk through this together.”
- Point out there is no right or wrong way to react to the loss.
- If they wish to say nothing and want to merely sit, respect their wishes.
- **Listen.** “You are not alone, I am here with you,” is the single most important message you can relay to them.
- **Be a good observer.** Look for trouble signs: worrying that someone else will die, poor sleeping/eating habits, etc.
- **Be honest.** Do not lie to them about death or use clichés. Use terms such as “died, death, dead” to avoid confusion. Simple, direct, and gentle use of these terms help them to know that it's permanent and not irreversible.
- **Give permission** to cry, look at photos, journal, visit the cemetery, etc. as needed.
- Avoid saying, “Don't worry. It will be okay.” Don't attempt to minimize the loss. Instead **validate that the loss** happened and they are okay to grieve.
- **Allow for silence.** It is okay not to know what to say. Simply being there beside them reassures them that they are not alone.
- **Be available.** Bereaved children need to know that they can count on you to listen to them,

*Remember, grieving is a personal process that has no time limit, and no one “right” way to do it.*