

# WEAVERBIRD TOP TIPS

## Grief and Loss



### KEEPING CONNECTED

- Losing someone is a difficult time for adults and children alike. The grieving process can go on for months, sometimes even years, and it's important for your child to feel safe, secure and connected wherever possible.
- Use physical affection to show your love and support. Hugging, rocking or stroking a child's back can be soothing and help to settle their emotional response. Words are sometimes not necessary.
- During the initial grieving period, ensure your child is with someone familiar such as a parent, grandparent, teacher or a babysitter where the child can ask questions and have some time to think.
- Maintain happy and fun times for the child; giving them permission to experience joy and balance, despite their loss.
- Share your own beliefs to help answer questions about what has happened to your lost loved one, and where they might be now.
- Create a new tradition or ritual together to remember your lost loved one. This may be to mark a special day, plant a memorial tree or say a special prayer.
- Refer to [Weaverbirds activities](#) which focus on connection both to present and lost loved ones. For example, 'Always In My Heart' activity is good for exploring feelings.
- Read other books with your child which focus on connection.
- Tell the child's teacher about the loss and ask the school to check in on the child whilst at school if you are unsure how your child is coping.
- Be proactive in keeping open communication with the school. Update staff as to changes in the child's life and seek feedback on how they are getting on socially, academically and emotionally. You can arrange a regular check-in during periods of high stress/ change at school pick up, via email or through a 'communications diary' which is kept in the child's schoolbag.

### KEEP IT SIMPLE

- Keep information sharing simple and age appropriate when communicating the situation to the child e.g. 'Grandma died because she was very old and her heart stopped working'. Keep the finer details for sharing with adult family members and friends or a Counsellor.

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- Children can become more needy when loss is experienced. It can be helpful to be very explicit with the weekly routine, so that child does not get any surprises. Anything out of the ordinary may require a detailed explanation and reassurances from safe and familiar adults. A visible, visual weekly plan clearly showing the current day and routine may help with this.
- Explain to the child that any sad or angry feelings you have relating to your loss are not caused by your child, and that it is not their fault that someone died.
- Draw on other resources or use others for support, recognising when external support of friends or professionals may be helpful.
- We can feel anger towards our lost loved ones for many reasons. When you need to share frustrations do this with other adults outside of your child's earshot, in order to avoid blaming your loved one or talking negatively about them in front of your child.
- Regardless of how you feel, keep all adult issues between adults. For example, if you have financial concerns do not share this with the child, rather use other supports to work out a plan, and advise your child of the plan once it is finalised.
- Do not be afraid to ask for help. Many people want to help but keep their distance for fear of being intrusive or saying the wrong thing. For many caring friends or family members it is a relief to know they can help you.
- Remember that grief is very personal and there is no right and wrong way to grieve. Grieving is an ongoing process. If you are concerned that you are struggling to provide a physically and emotionally safe and stable environment for yourself and your child it is important to reach out to others, such as family members, friends, your GP and a Grief Counselling Service.
- Reading about models of grief can provide comfort by validating our experiences. Stroebe & Schut's (1995) Dual-Process Model of grief can be a useful way of conceptualising the processes that occur in grief, and understanding that our progress through the journey is not linear. They theorise that we bounce between focusing on our loss and focusing on moving forward and facing our 'new life' without our loved one. Both of these concepts have their place.

### PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

- Just like learning to read, understanding patterns in our behaviour, and articulating and understanding our own emotions takes practice.
- You may benefit from reading your Weaverbird Story regularly, as well as children's books on this topic.
- Use the activities in your story and those on our [website](#).
- Sign up to our [Weaverbird Blog](#) for new tips and activities.

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### CONSISTENCY

- Most children find loss and a change in circumstances very unsettling. Try to maintain routines and rituals as much as possible. For example, the same evening/ bedtime routines, same extracurricular activities.
- Your child may benefit from having a special cuddly toy which they can carry with them as an ever-present means of soothing themselves.
- Keep changes to a minimum – ideally keep your child in the same pre-school/ child care/ school/ baby-sitter so that other areas of their life remain similar.
- Whilst it is tempting to be more lenient with a child during difficult periods, boundaries and expectations are containing for a child and help them feel secure.

### ACCESS MORE HELP

- Make the most of existing social supports and family members.
- Don't be afraid to seek help.
- If you, your family members or school have concerns or are noticing any of the following behaviours, speak with your GP about a referral to a Child Psychologist:
  - Ongoing social isolation or withdrawal
  - Aggressive or acting out behaviour
  - Regression (not being able to do skills previously mastered)
  - Significant distress on separation from caregivers
  - Crying more than usual

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESILIENCE

- Experiencing loss for a child can be life changing and supporting your child as much as possible is key to help them navigate the grieving process. Ever heard of the book 'Your Fantastic Elastic Brain' by JoAnn Deak? – Well, our brain is just that – it can stretch and grow. Just as we exercise our bodies, we can also exercise our brains and learn and master new skills.
- Supporting your child to manage difficult times and ride the waves of emotion, provides them with the confidence that they are able to tackle the challenges that life will throw at them. Try and use this difficult time for your family as an opportunity for growth, so that you are able to experience some positives. There are a number of resources on 'Grit,' 'Growth Mindset' and 'Optimism' for both adults and children.

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### FURTHER READING

#### Children's Books:

- When Dinosaurs Die, Brown & Brown (Useful for understanding death and loss)
- The Invisible String, Patrice Karst (Useful for Connection)
- The Day the Sea Went out and Never Came Back, Margot Sunderland (Useful for Loss)
- In My Heart, Jo Witek (Useful for Feelings)
- Your Fantastic Elastic Brain, JoAnn Deak (Useful for Perseverance, Growth Mindset)
- What Do You Do With A Problem, Kobi Yamada (Useful for Courage, Facing Fears, Grit)
- Have You Filled a Bucket Today, Carol McCloud (Useful for Feeling Uplifted by Giving to Others)

#### Weblinks:

- <https://www.maggiedent.com/common-concerns/death-loss/>
- <https://whatsyourgrief.com/>

#### Podcasts :

- Grief out Loud Series from the Doughty Centre <https://player.fm/series/grief-out-loud-2391499>

#### Support Service:

- <https://www.feelthemagic.org.au/>

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