

## Suggested Reading

### For Parents/Caregivers

- **The Grieving Child: A Parent's Guide**~By H. Fitzgerald
- **How Do We Tell the Children?** A step-by-step guide for helping children two to teen cope when someone dies~By D. Schaefer and C. Lyons
- **Finding the Words** How to talk with Children and Teens about death, suicide, funerals, homicide, cremation and other end-of-life matters~By Dr. Alan Wolfelt

### For Children and Teens:

#### Age 3-11

- **The Education of Little Tree**~By F. Arter and R. Strickland
- **When Dinosaurs Die:** A guide to understanding Death~By L. Kransny Brown
- **The Tenth Good Thing about Barney**~By J. Viorst

#### Age 12-17

- **When a friend dies:** A book for teens about grieving and healing~By Gootman, Espeland & Stith
- **Fire in My Heart. Ice in My Veins.** A journal for teenagers experiencing a loss~By E. Traisman

## Three Things to Remember

### ...when Supporting Grieving Children and Teenagers

1. Children and teens are frightened by what they don't understand or are unable to explain. Find ways to explain death in simple concrete terms. Explain that the person who has died will no longer be able to do everyday activities (i.e. walk, talk, eat, breathe, feel).
2. Children and teenagers will learn to grieve from the important adults in their lives. Help them understand that their feelings are normal. Also, help them to find safe, acceptable ways to express these feelings.
3. Children and teenagers are unlikely to talk or express their feelings about death, if the adults in their lives are not open to these discussions.

Please feel free to contact  
Stedman Community Hospice at  
519.751.7096 Ext. 2500 for information on  
Children's Bereavement Support Programs.

**Did you know that the Hospice exists solely because  
of the generosity of our caring community?**

**Donations to St. Joseph's Lifecare Foundation  
(the official fundraising organization for  
Stedman Community Hospice), have brought this  
beautiful building to life. Our community has funded  
vital programs and services, purchased medical  
equipment, patient meals, furnishings, therapeutic  
gardens, heat/hydro and everything in between.**

**Ongoing donations are vital to ensure that  
Hospice patients and families will never get a  
bill for the care they need and deserve!**

**If you would like to donate to the Hospice,  
please contact the Foundation office  
or give directly on-line at [www.sjlc.ca](http://www.sjlc.ca).  
Thank you for caring!**

**St. Joseph's Lifecare Foundation's mailing  
address is the same as the Hospice.**



**Stedman Community Hospice**  
99 Wayne Gretzky Parkway  
Brantford, ON N3S 6T6  
519.751.7096 Ext. 2500  
[www.sjlc.ca](http://www.sjlc.ca)



Helping  
Children  
Grieve

*If you have been diagnosed with a life limiting illness; you and your family are dealing with end of life issues; or you are trying to cope with the death of a loved one; our team is here to help.*

*At the core of our being is a hunger for meaning, purpose, integrity and harmony, all leading to peace of mind and soul.*

# HELPING CHILDREN GRIEVE

## Grief of a Child or Teen

The journey of loss can be a difficult one. Though each individual will experience grief at their own pace and in their own unique way, Stedman Community Hospice believes it is a journey that no one needs to travel alone.

Therefore, we have provided you with this information that may be helpful to better understand the needs of your Child/Teen when a death has occurred in your family.

***If Children are old enough to love  
~ they are old enough to grieve.***

The death of a loved one can be a difficult experience; impacting the physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual well-being of Children and Teens. At a time in their lives when they have yet to develop the needed coping skills in navigating this new experience, Children and Teens will need to be well supported.

***“With love and understanding, adults can guide children through this vulnerable time and help make the experience a valuable part of a child’s personal growth and development.”***

*~ Dr. Alan Wolfelt  
World renowned leader in Grief and Bereavement  
Founder of Centre for Loss and Life Transitions*

## Helpful Facts

- Children grieve in chunks. They can cry one moment and be off playing in another. This is a normal, inherent coping strategy.
- Children will often need to revisit their loss as they develop.
- Children are concrete. Phrases like, **“He went to sleep,”** can be frightening and confusing.
- Children and Teens may be hesitant to express feelings and ask questions with family members for fear of upsetting them.
- Children and Teens may want to participate in the funeral service or celebration of life but not know how to ask.
- Grieving Children and Teens may perceive the death as their fault.
- Grieving parents may find it difficult to support their Children/Teens while grieving themselves.

## The Grief Journey... Children/Teens Grieve According to their Development Stage

### Infants:

- Sensitive to disruptions in their world and to the grieving adults around them
- May experience separation anxiety, crying more, disturbed sleeping patterns and irritability

### Needs:

- Extra care, nurturing and comfort
- Consistency in care-giving and routine
- Well supported adults

### 2-4 Year Olds:

- Do not have the cognitive ability to understand the concept of death and view it as reversible
- May regress in their behaviours (i.e. bed-wetting, separation anxiety, disturbed sleep, etc.)

### Needs:

- Comfort, reassurance, nurturing and consistent routine
- Simple and honest ‘age appropriate’ answers to their questions

### 4-7 Year Olds:

- Magical thinking and wishing
- Death may still be seen as reversible
- Thoughts of guilt (i.e. Daddy died because I didn’t listen to him)

### Needs:

- Language to help them express their feelings
- Opportunities to express through play

### 7-11 Year Olds:

- Beginning to understand that death is final
- May have more concerns and questions with the body
- May act out or withdraw
- May want more detailed information

### Needs:

- Honest answers
- Opportunities to express feelings
- Avenues to mourn and vent

### Adolescents:

- Understand the reality of death yet may struggle with **“why”** and feelings of life being unfair
- May act out or withdraw
- May want to take on the role of the deceased (i.e. parent)
- May seek detailed information
- May seek support outside of the family circle

### Needs:

- Honest answers
- Opportunities to question
- Adults who can listen and validate their feelings and help them explore the **“whys”**
- Healthy avenues to grieve and mourn
- May need increased physical exercise to vent energy