



Understanding Children's Fears After a Death

When a parent dies, children not only have their grief to endure, but they often have unspoken fears. These fears can interfere with their sleeping, eating, ability to concentrate at school, do homework, get along with others and even have fun.

As usual, the children of Lee's Place have been our best teachers. They have shared their fears and worries. We have learned that sometimes fears are not always rational and easily expressed, but need to be explored and talked through. Very often, children are afraid of the same things adults are afraid of when their world has been shaken to its core. Below is a list of the fears commonly expressed by our clients:

1. Will we be able to keep our house?
2. Do we have enough money?
3. Is mom (or dad) going to die, too?
4. Who will take care of me if mom does die?
5. Did I make dad sick?
6. Could I have made dad better?
7. Will I get sick? Can I catch the same disease?
8. How can I get mom to stop crying, sleeping so much?

Since grief is often too big for words, we have learned to directly ask about the more common fears and worries. With family counseling, these fears can be addressed between the surviving parent and child/ren so the unknown can become known and understood. Losing a parent, changes a child forever, but we can lighten the grief load by offering as much knowledge and reassurance as possible.

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