

## Talking with a Child about Specific Types of Loss

### When a Parent or Caregiver Dies

- When a child loses their main caregiver, it is important to assure the child about who will care for them
- Younger children may ask when their parent will return
  - “She is not coming back, but I’m here for you and I’ll take care of you”
- Older children may ask about their parent on special days
  - “I’m sorry your dad can’t be here at graduation, I know it’s an important day. I’m here and your family is here to support you.”

### When a Sibling Dies

- When a child loses their sibling, complicated feelings may arise
  - Depending on the relationships, feelings of love and caring may be mixed with competition
  - Feelings may be mixed with guilt and self-blame
- Assure children that this is normal and provide a space to talk about this
- Children may seek others to talk outside their family to discuss their emotions
  - Finding a trusted adult, counselor, or a grief support group may be helpful for the child to process their complicated emotions

### When an Infant Sibling Dies

- When a child loses an expected sibling or a very young sibling, feelings may be complicated
- Provide a space to discuss their concerns, fears, and emotions
  - Be patient with questions
- Find a way to honor your lost loved one
- Find ways to care for yourself during this difficult time

### When a Grandparent Dies

- When a child loses a grandparent, many questions or emotions may arise
- Answer questions with facts and age-appropriate information

### When a Friend or Classmate Dies

- When a friend or classmate dies, children may have fear for their own safety or anxiety upon returning to school
- Help find a safe person at school your child may be able to talk to
  - Counselor, a coach
  - Discuss with the counselor a plan if your child needs additional support
- Answer questions with facts and age-appropriate information
  - “Suzie’s body stopped working because she had a disease called cancer. You can’t catch cancer. It’s okay to be sad or worried, I’m here for you if you want to talk about your feelings.”