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## Twelve Ways to Help a Grieving Child

1. **Offer opportunities to talk** about death and loss as they experience it in everyday life.
2. **Include children** in rituals whenever possible and appropriate.
3. **Share** your expressions of sadness and pain.
4. **Be available** to listen.
5. **Pay attention** to a child's behavior and let them know when you notice a change.
6. **Answer all questions** about death and loss as honestly as possible.
7. **Be willing to wonder** and explore answers to their questions.
8. **Face your own feelings** of grief.
9. **Do not isolate or insulate children from grief.** Remember grief is normal.
10. **Continue to expect a child to function.** Be firm, yet gentle and kind.
11. **Find help** for children who need it. Refer to support groups or counseling as needed.
12. **Continue to be available** long after you think they "should be over it." Remember grief will be revisited throughout their lives. Reach out and continue to care, just as you are now!

Adapted from Laura Bray Harting, CSW (1995), *The Center of Living with Loss*

## **Finding the Right Words:**

- ✓ I am sorry for your pain.
- ✓ I am sorry about \_\_\_\_'s death, and I'd like to help in any way I can.
- ✓ I am here for you whenever you need me.
- ✓ I can't know how you feel, but I want to help you in any way I can."

## **Expressions to Avoid:**

- ✗ I understand/know how you feel.
- ✗ Move on - get over it.
- ✗ You must be over it by now.
- ✗ You're doing such a wonderful job!
- ✗ It could be worse, you still have ....
- ✗ You'll be strong because of this.
- ✗ It was G-d's will.
- ✗ \_\_\_\_\_ is in a better place.