

How to help children who are grieving a death that happened when they were very young:

1. Create memories by telling stories, looking at pictures and home videos. Tell how the person interacted with the child, what they did at the child's birth, what songs they sang when the child was a baby, games they played with the child, nicknames they had for the child. Tell stories about the loved one's childhood... what they liked to do when they were a certain age, trouble they got into, where they lived, etc.
2. Share the person's possessions with the child. Give them something special to keep.
3. Emphasize feelings are okay. Don't be afraid to cry with the child and to say you are angry too.
4. Talk about sorrow and frustration over not having that person in your life now. What do you miss out on? What does the child miss? Expectations that can not be met.
5. Ask other family members and friends to share their memories of the person who died... maybe they would write a story they remember, or tell it on tape, or even spend some time with the child and tell him in person.
6. Emphasize that the person who dies loved the child and was aware the child loved him or her. Give examples of how they showed their affection to each other.
7. Be very careful not to transfer your grief onto your child. Seek outlets for your own feelings through adult grief support groups, friends, a journal, counseling, or other outlets.
8. Recognize that you and your child will probably not grieve the same way, at the same time, or at the same pace. Be respectful and supportive of your child's grief journey.
9. Don't wait for the child to talk about the person who died. When the child does initiate conversation about the person who has died, respond to questions openly and as honestly as possible.
10. There may be anger when shown pictures or when talking about memories of other family members because the child does not have those memories. There may also be a feeling of being left out of a certain part of the family history, especially if he or she was the youngest and is the only one without the memory.
11. Do not be surprised if a child with no memory sometimes develops a memory and says he or she remembers things you don't think are possible.