

# Discussing Grief with Children

One of the most difficult tasks following the death of a loved one is discussing and explaining the death with other children in the family. This task is even more distressing when the parents are in the midst of their own grief. Since many adults have problems dealing with death, they assume that children also cannot cope with it. Parents may try to protect other children by leaving them out of the discussions and rituals associated with the death. Thus, children may feel anxious, bewildered,

and alone. The children may be left on their own to seek answers to their questions at a time when they most need the help and assurance of those around them.

All children will be affected in some way by a death in the family. Above all, children who are too young for explanations need love from the significant people in their lives to maintain their own security. Young children may not verbalize their feelings about a death in a family and may hold back their feelings. In reality they may be so overwhelmed that they may appear to be unaffected. It is common for them to express their feelings through behavior and play. Regardless of this ability or inability to express themselves, children do grieve, often very deeply.

