



CHILDREN AGED 10-13

OVERCOMING THE  
ISOLATION OF GRIEF



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### SUPPORTING CHILDREN THROUGH THE LONELINESS OF GRIEF

Grief can be an isolating experience for children. As a parent, it is crucial to provide comfort for your child, emphasising they will continue to be cared for and loved no matter what. Through the normalisation of grief, active communication, and various strategies, you can help your child navigate the loneliness of grief. The presence of loving, compassionate people in a child's life cultivates reassurance and a sense of security.

#### 1. THE COMPASSIONATE ADULT'S ROLE

Children need reassurance from their remaining parent or caregiver. It is healthy for your child to have their feelings acknowledged and validated, as well as to see an adult authentically express and display emotions. Children who lack support, love, and/or compassion from an adult are more likely to be lonesome and experience feelings of isolation in their grief. With care and understanding, adults can guide children through this vulnerable time and help make the experience a valuable part of a child's personal growth and development.

#### 2. NORMALISE GRIEF

An adult who talks openly to a child about the death of a loved one, will help them recognise that grief is a natural feeling. It is important to communicate to children that their feelings are not to be ashamed of or something to hide. When adults avoid talking about the death and hide their own expressions of grief, children may suffer more from feelings of isolation and lonesome in their grief.

#### 3. ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION

Encouraging a grieving child to talk will help them overcome feelings of isolation, if not to you, then to friends, teachers, or a therapist. Do not attempt to make it all better or dismiss their grief. Allow them to mourn, and be available but respect their need to grieve in their own way. Making yourself available to have an open, clear, and judgment-free conversation is key when encouraging children to express their thoughts and feelings. Even if a child does not communicate with you in the moment, simply making yourself available can encourage them to communicate in the future.



#### 4. PROMOTE CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Children can express feelings through physical outlets and symbolic play such as drawing and telling stories. They often have complicated feelings and painful emotions related to their loss, and the use of creativity can help them identify and manage their feelings. Creative hobbies such as writing, drawing, painting, and drama, can promote self-expression, which is helpful for grieving children experiencing social isolation. Creative arts can enhance children's skill set in language and communication, as well as specific artistic skills, which may contribute to feelings of positive self-esteem and self-worth. The ability of a child to trust an adult enough to express painful emotions is a key component to breaking down feelings of isolation, mistrust, and cynicism.

#### 5. BEHAVIOURAL ACTIVATION

Behavioural activation is based on the idea that when we do activities that provide us with a sense of achievement, enjoyment, or connection to others, we feel better. It is less likely that we will do activities that make us feel good if we are experiencing low mood or feelings of depression. When this happens, we end up in a vicious cycle where we do fewer activities that are good for us, so we feel worse emotionally and physically. For children who are withdrawing and/or feeling isolated, it is important to plan activities that have a good balance of practical, social and personal value. Sticking to plans, limiting screen-time, and giving your child the autonomy to choose activities, are helpful ways to apply principles of behavioural activation.

1 IN EVERY 20 AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN  
WILL EXPERIENCE THE  
DEATH OF A PARENT BEFORE  
THEY REACH THE AGE OF 18.

**PROVIDING GRIEF EDUCATION AND  
SUPPORT FOR BEREAVED CHILDREN  
AND THEIR FAMILIES**



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