



**5 Ways To Talk to a
Grieving Child on
Father's Day**

(as recommended by grieving kids!)

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Father's Day is a difficult day for many families. For lots of us, it is hard to know what to say or how to support grieving kids. Through fear of saying the wrong thing, we often don't say anything at all.

We want to help you change that.

We asked kids from our Feel the Magic community what they would like their friends and family to say to them on Father's Day.

1. "Ask me what my favourite memory is of my dad" – Olivia

Talking about their father and sharing happy memories of him can help many children maintain their connection with their dad on Father's Day, as well as feeling included in this significant calendar day.

You could ask what sort of things they did together, or how they celebrated special days. If you're not sure of their dad's name, take this opportunity to ask.

Grieving kids might not often get the opportunity to say their loved one's name, despite many children enjoying doing so. Remember, not all kids will have positive memories, and it is important to let children share their experiences without shame or judgement.

FOR EXAMPLE:

"Hi Jake, I know you must be thinking about your dad a lot today. If you feel comfortable, I'd love to hear more about him. What is your favourite memory of you together?"



2. "Include me, instead of focusing on that dad's not here anymore, focus on what he did when he was here" – Hayley

Many children are excluded, sometimes unintentionally, from Father's Day conversations, activities, stalls, and crafts.

This can happen for many misguided reasons, like not wanting to remind children of their loss.

But it can result in young people feeling even more excluded by their friends, peers, and community.

Instead, ask the child if and how they would like to participate in Father's Day activities.

They may like to buy a gift for their loved one to be kept in a special place, or perhaps they would like to honour a different male in their life, or even buy a gift for themselves!

It is best to ask kids directly and include them in decision making. Having a plan in place for how Father's Day will be acknowledged and celebrated can also help children feel more secure during these significant days.

FOR EXAMPLE:

"Hi Chloe, it's the Father's Day stall soon. Would you like to shop with me to look for something to remember your dad?."

3. "Ask me what makes me happy when I think of him" – Olivia

This Father's Day, asking children to share something about their dad can help them feel acknowledged and seen.

Some children may like 'permission' to talk about their loved one. It is helpful to encourage children to talk about their loved one (if they would like to) and let them know you'd like to hear their stories.

Happiness during grief can be a complicated feeling for young people and can result in feelings of guilt or shame.

It's important to let children know that these reactions are normal and valid. Some children may not want to talk about their dad, and that's okay too – but this should be their decision, not yours.



FOR EXAMPLE:

"Hey Bella, I just wanted to let you know that I'm thinking of you and your dad today on Father's Day. Is there something that makes you happy when you think about your dad today?"



4. "Ask me how I am doing, ask if I want to talk to somebody and be there to listen" – Jessica

Children told us that they like to be asked how they are going, and to have a chance to talk about their feelings.

You don't need to 'fix' them, make them feel better, or try and cheer them up. Simply be with them and allow them to feel their emotions without judgement.

Children and families might have lots of support from family and friends on special days like Father's Day, but sometimes it is the lead up and the after these days that is the most painful.

Remember to check in on young people before and after Father's Day, not just on the day itself.

FOR EXAMPLE:

"Hey Milly, how are you going today? I want you to know I'm here if you want to talk (or cry or laugh or yell!). This must be a challenging time of year – no need to respond if you're not up for talking now."

5. "I would like people to bring him up by just talking about the things he did" – Jordan

Many grieving kids enjoy telling and hearing stories about their loved ones who have died.

If you can, consider sharing a memory you have with their dad, or a photo of their dad that they may not have seen before.

Some children worry that their loved one will be forgotten and talking about their loved one with them is a way to ensure they continue to be loved, celebrated, and remembered.



FOR EXAMPLE:

"Hey Ben! I'm wearing your dad's favourite outfit today – denim on denim! I remember he always wore that even when it went out of fashion. Remembering him today."

It can be difficult to know what, how and when to have conversations with grieving kids.

In our [Grief Resource Hub](#), you'll find information to help you through a range of challenges – from dealing with the news of a terminal diagnosis, to how to speak to a child after an immediate loss, to getting through the first 12 months and beyond – across all ages including teens.

Funded by our supporters, these resources are created by our Clinical Psychologist. If you can't find what you need, please [contact us](#), or [make a time to talk to one of the Feel the Magic team](#).



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