

Benefits of Counseling

Some of the benefits of seeking counseling are:

- Counseling can help develop coping skills and strategies—allowing for the continuance of school, play and relationships.
- Establishment of a support network can help to decrease the negative physical, psychological and emotional effects that often result from grief.

Grief can be utilized as an opportunity to build confidence, and reduce isolation.

Who can help?

The Travis County Sheriff's Office Victim Services Unit can assist you with information regarding your case status, Victims' Rights, Crime Victim Compensation, navigation of the criminal justice system and referrals to the appropriate community helping professionals or organizations according to your specific needs.



Resources

The Christi Center

512-467-2600

www.christicenter.org

Austin Center for Grief and Loss

512-472-7878

www.austingrief.org

Explaining Funerals to Children

Victim Services Unit

5555 Airport Blvd
Austin, TX 78751
512-854-9709



Name/ID Number:

Direct Number:

Mailing Address:

PO Box 1748
Austin, TX 78767

If you are concerned about discussing funerals or cremations with your children, you are not alone. We may hesitate to talk to children, but if we do we can learn what they know and what they don't know. We can also learn if they have particular fears or misconceptions. Once we know this, we can use this information to help them process the loss of a loved one. We can also use this information to help them reach an understanding that death is a natural process and memorial services can help with the healing process.

What to Say ...

...about funerals and burials.

When a person dies, there's usually a funeral or memorial service. The body is taken in a special car, called a hearse, to the funeral home. To get ready for the burial, the person is dressed in his/her best or favorite clothes and then placed in a long box called a coffin or casket. The body stays at the funeral home until it is time for the service.

Some families have a "wake" or "viewing" that is usually at the funeral home. This lets family and friends see the dead body and express their sadness. Sometimes people put special objects, drawings or poems in the casket.

The funeral service or memorial is held at the funeral home, a mortuary or in a religious house of worship like a church. At the service, a religious leader usually says prayers for the dead person and makes a speech about his/her life. This speech is called a eulogy and reminds people of the good things about the dead person. Sometimes there is singing and music. Other friends and relatives sometimes talk about the person who died.

Sometimes the body is in the coffin and it's open so you can see or touch the dead body. Sometimes the coffin is closed and sometimes there is no coffin.

During the service people often cry. Crying is a good thing because it helps let out the sadness and other feelings. It will help if you have a special friend or relative with you at the service.

After the service, people carry the coffin to the hearse. Then everyone follows in a line of cars to the cemetery where dead people are buried. A hole has already been dug in the ground. People stand around the hole and the coffin and prayers are said for the dead person.

Sometimes people shovel dirt into the hole over the coffin and other times the cemetery workers do this after people leave.

Later a stone or marker is placed at the grave to mark the place where the body is buried. The stone can have the person's name, birthday, date of death and maybe a saying or poem. Visiting the grave can help you feel close to your loved one.

...about cremations.

Sometimes the dead body is not buried in the ground, but it is cremated. The mortician picks up the dead body and takes it to the funeral home to be prepared. The dead body is then taken to a crematorium and high heat is used to turn the dead body into ashes. Ashes, which look like sand, are usually given to the family in a box or urn. The family may keep the ashes at home, bury them in the ground, store them at a special place at the cemetery or scatter them at a favorite location of the person who died.

After the body is cremated, the family may have a memorial service to remember the person who died. The memorial service is much like a funeral. Pictures of the one who died may be there also.

...about feelings.

All of these services can help people remember and celebrate the life of the person who has died. There may be some happy thoughts and some sadness. The feelings can get pretty mixed up. It helps if you can talk to your parents or another family member or friend about your feelings. Talk as long as you need to and as many times as you need to. These services can help all of your family and friends to show their love for each other.

Misconceptions and Facts

I won't say or do the right thing.

There are no right things to do or say.

They won't want to talk about it.

That's often all they do want to talk about. Let that be their choice, not yours.

I might upset them.

They are already upset and being upset is healthy. When they don't find a way to cope with the feelings, it becomes unhealthy.

They need to keep busy.

New activities confuse them. Not thinking about it, delays their grief.

Getting rid of reminders help.

Getting rid of reminders tells them it's wrong to think of the dead person.

I won't mention it unless they do.

Not discussing it suggests there is something bad about the person or their death. They will feel hurt and sense your discomfort.

Once they've been angry or guilty once, that should be the end of it.

Phases don't follow a pattern and can happen repeatedly.

It is morbid to want to touch or talk about the body.

Wanting to touch is healthy and concrete. Touching and talking is a good way to say goodbye and make the death real.

It is easier to use terms like "passed away" or "gone to heaven".

These confuse and frighten children: "dead" is better.

If they're not expressing grief, children aren't grieving.

They may not know how to express their grief or have been given permission to grieve. They may be worried about upsetting others.