

How to support grieving families in your community

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SUMMARY

Leaders working with grieving children and families must prioritize emotional and physical safety, allowing open conversations about loss while providing practical support. This involves validating feelings, using clear language about death, and addressing the practical needs of grieving families to help them cope.

- *Emotional safety is crucial; encourage open discussions about deceased loved ones.*
- *Validate emotions without claiming to understand their pain personally.*
- *Use clear and honest language about death to avoid confusion.*
- *Practical support includes helping with daily tasks like grocery shopping or cleaning.*
- *Offer meals or financial assistance to grieving families to ease their burdens.*
- *Schools and churches can support grieving children through sympathy cards and small gifts.*
- *Organizing outings for grieving children can provide relief for overwhelmed parents.*
- *Acts of kindness from the community can help grieving individuals feel God's presence.*

[Music] so then let's move on to what does it mean to be safe in this situation as a leader that's working with Children and Families Cindy when don't you get us started with that conversation that part sure so I think safety obviously there's physical safety but and I think in

terms of helping people with grief want to be emotionally safe for them um for both kids and parents who are grieving and so I think a lot of this happens just in how we talk to people um and so we show safety to children and their families by allowing them to talk about their loved one who died sometimes they just want to talk about him and so I think we can encourage that by asking questions about their loved one asking

what was he like what did you like uh doing with them um and then as they express their emotions um just validating those emotions um you know saying things like you know it sounds like you're really struggling with this or maybe you're struggling getting out of bed in the morning or you really missed your brother and you're so sad that he died um and so expressing empathy but I think also being careful that unless you've experienced that loss yourself you can't

say I know what you feel like and so I think we want to be careful about saying things like that um but you can say things like I imagine that is very hard to deal with um I think we also show safety by answering kids questions in an honest and developmentally appropriate manner sometimes you know we don't want to say the word died or death and so people say things that can be very confusing to kids like he passed away or

I'm sorry you lost your brother or saying things like you know he's an angel in heaven now you know instead we just need to say things like I'm sorry to hear your brother died you know don't be afraid to use those those real words so let's talk a little bit about how to support grieving families in a really tangible way and um so Stacy I'd like to start with you what are ways that have been helpful

or that you would recommend for Ministry leaders I tell people all the time take care of the Practical needs um if you're dealing with you know a grieving parent whether they're grieving the death of a child or the death of their spouse you know listen they may not remember to buy toilet paper so you could just buy toilet paper and take it to them right you could clean their bathroom you could offer to do their laundry my I remember Saturdays I would

just sit our dirty laundry out on my porch and it would come back clean um and it was just this beautiful thing remembering that even when parents are grieving they want to be there for their kids and if the burden of all of the rest of life is so great it limits their ability to be there for their kids and so taking care of things for the parents allows them to be free to be with their

children in their children's grief even more and so um that can look like a a million things but um offering you know you you have a widow at church and you can tell she's got a really busy work week saying hey can I bring you a meal on Thursday it seems like you have a really busy week can I just cook for you this week or you know it looks to me like your car needs some repairs how are

you financially could we bring could we collect some money so that you don't have to take on extra shifts at work and you can be there for your children you know things like that are are so meaningful and I think they um I tell people all the time this is what it means means for the church to allow a grieving person to feel like God is actually near because you are taking you are the hands and feet of of God words

that say oh but God is faithful oh but sometimes they can be helpful but what's really helpful is when God's people come in and take care of today's needs um those things showed me so much that God was with me because he was in the people that were actually taking care of getting us toilet paper making sure we were fed um Cindy how about in a church or a school setting um what are some tangible ways that we can support children in

that setting yeah so oftentimes when parents are grieving maybe there been a loss of a family member a parent or a child um other children tend to get lost in the shuffle and so I think it's helpful for churches and schools to to come alongside that child maybe they can have their class write handwritten sympathy cards to their classmate um that also by the way helps the other children in the class to learn how to minister to others

who are grieving um and then you and as a teacher and maybe another teacher could hand deliver those cards to that child with a stuffed animal or another small gift and I think just visiting that child would mean the world to those parents and maybe even offer to take that child away for a few hours obviously you would want two adults for safety reasons but take them out for ice cream or invite them over to your house

for a play date and I think just providing that type of support for the children also indirectly supports the parents who just may not have the bandwidth to do that for their own children and can give them a few hours of not having to think about their own [Music] children [Music]