

## WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN THROUGH THIS DIFFICULT TIME

**Children do not need to be taught how to grieve. They will do it naturally and in healthy ways if we allow them and if we provide a safe atmosphere, permission and example to do so. The following points may help to construct advice to give to parents.**

- Listen carefully. Let them tell their story. Tell them that the reactions they are having are normal
- Pay extra attention, spend extra time with them, be more nurturing and comforting
- Reassure them that they are safe
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse". People are not consoled by such statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and help them
- Do not be surprised by changes in behaviour or personality. They will return to their usual selves in time
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally. Help them to understand the relationship between anger and trauma. Help them find safe ways to express their feelings e.g. by drawing, exercise, or talking
- Help them to understand that defiance, aggression and risk behaviour is a way to avoid feeling the pain, hurt and or fear they are feeling
- When going out, let them know where you are going and when you will be back.
- If you are out for a long time telephone and reassure them
- Tolerate regressive behaviour such as nail biting, thumb sucking, or the need for a night light
- Share your own experience of being frightened of something and getting through it
- If they are feeling guilt or shame, emphasise that they did not choose for this to happen and that they are not to blame. Even if they were angry with the person who died, or had been mean to them, this did not make it happen
- Work with your local church, school support services and other available services
- If your local church has set up a reflective area or prayer space take your child to visit it
- Light a candle and say a prayer or have a quiet time thinking about the person, situation or their own feelings
- Obtain any information / support leaflets from the Educational Psychologist
- Buy one of the suggested children's storybooks and share together