

THE HELPING ADULT'S ROLE

- Provide a supportive and safe environment.
- Provide a constant physical presence.
- Accept and validate the current and natural feeling responses of the child.
- Be aware of double messages the child may receive, and prevent them from occurring.
- Help the child understand that physical symptoms are a normal response when grieving.
- Provide honest and specific answers to questions about death and dying.
- If you do not know the answer to a specific question, or if a question can not be answered, be honest with the child.
- Be aware of the potential for the “Big Man”/”Big Woman” syndrome occurrence, so as to prevent indirect or direct contributing to this behavior.
- Understand that anger is a natural part of grief, so that through permissive listening, the bereaved child learns that feelings are not judged as being good or bad, but are accepted as real and present.
- Talk openly about memories – good or bad.
- Help the child understand that being angry or upset with a person does not cause the person to die.
- Model expressions of feelings to provide permission for the child to not be afraid or embarrassed to talk about feelings that arise.