

General Effects:

Confusion: A child may experience confusion surrounding the idea of death, where the deceased has gone or if they will return. They begin wondering what this means now and what this will mean in the future.

Depression: A child may lack the support and protection they received from the deceased- perhaps feeling pain, distress, fear and isolation. A child who loses a guardian at a young age is 3 times more likely to experience depression or PTSD later in life.

Attachment/Isolation: Depending on the circumstance and the child, a child will react differently to death. A child may go out of their way to seek support, and will find solace in attaching themselves to others. This provides the emotional

support that was lacking. Children may fear losing others and avoid forming close connections so as not to experience a loss again. These children can struggle to form relationships with others due to their tendency to feel unsafe and fearful in the world around them

Academics: The grieving process associated with losing a loved one can prevent a child from learning and developing socially and academically. When a child falls behind in school, this can lead to lack of confidence and further isolation.

Anger: Children can experience anger after the death of a loved one. They are confused as to what happened and why it had to happen to them.

Advice for Mentors:

Support

- Show you are there for your Little. Express emotions and show vulnerability. Show your Little that you are comfortable confiding in them with appropriate examples and feelings. Provide reassurance and act as a support system when necessary, building a sense of connection.
- Follow your Little's lead. Do not initiate conversations or ask direct questions regarding a loss but let your Little determine how conversations will go and when they happen. You can express your care and concern for a Little, but avoid asking them to express themselves.
- While you may know about the death, do not feel as though you need to solve anything. Do your best to provide support for the child, but it is not your job to fix it.
- A Little may be confused about some things and may look to you for advice. Be sure to speak to the guardian about how your Little goes about this and how they would like you to handle this.

Show commitment and allow your Little to understand that you are in this long-term

- It may be helpful to express commitment to your Little in a physical format. Create a calendar with the match activities you plan together. Allowing your Little to see this will illustrate that this is long-term, and show them that you are not leaving.
- Avoid cancelling hang outs as much as possible. It is important to show your Little that you will not break plans and leave, allowing trust to develop. If you do need to cancel, be sure to do it in advance and provide an alternative time to hang out. Apologize for rescheduling and emphasize that you WANT to spend time together.

Stay positive while acknowledging sadness

- Do not discourage a Little from expressing sadness or negative emotions. By appearing uncomfortable or changing topics too quickly, you can reinforce the idea that they should not be feeling sad or that it is not okay to express feelings. Be an active listener and remain supportive, but don't feel the need to have any answers.
- A Little may be down at times and specific things may trigger the topic of a lost loved one. Be sure to remain positive. Be there for support but also refer back to the positive people in their life. Some ways to do this are: Ask your Little to tell you about some of their best friends who are there for support. Have your Little explain what characteristics they admire in a friend.
- Bring up other positive things in their life and have them tell you what they like about it.

PLEASE CALL MATCH SUPPORT at (617) 956-0283 FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO DISCUSS YOUR MATCH