



## HELPING A CHILD CARRY THEIR LOVED ONE WITH THEM AS THEY GROW

*Supporting a Lifelong Connection While Making  
Room for the Child's Own Future*

As children grow after a death, they can carry the person they loved forward without being defined by the loss. Memories, values, stories, traditions, photographs, objects, and lessons can remain part of their identity while they continue developing new relationships, interests, goals, and dreams. Remembering and living forward do not have to compete.

### THE RELATIONSHIP CAN CHANGE WITHOUT DISAPPEARING

A young child may connect through a photograph or favorite object. An older child may connect through stories, values, music, faith, humor, service, or choices inspired by the person. Continuing bonds can evolve naturally as the child matures.

### WHAT YOU MAY NOTICE

- Wanting to know what the person was like at the child's current age.
- Bringing the person's memory into achievements, milestones, traditions, or important decisions.
- Feeling both comfort and sadness when imagining what the person would think or say.

### GENTLE REMINDER

Moving forward is not moving away from the person who died. A child can build a full life while continuing to carry love, memory, and connection.

### LET MEMORY SUPPORT IDENTITY - NOT LIMIT IT

**A child may proudly carry a parent's kindness, sibling's humor, grandparent's traditions, or friend's influence. At the same time, avoid telling the child they must live for the person who died, fulfill that person's dreams, or become a replacement for them.**

### WORDS THAT CAN HELP

**Try: "You can carry what you loved about him and still become completely yourself." "She is part of your story, but you get to write your own future." "You do not have to be sad to prove you remember."**

### MAKE ROOM FOR NEW EXPERIENCES

New relationships, celebrations, achievements, and happiness do not betray the person who died. Children may need reassurance that moving forward, laughing, loving others, and building a future are compatible with remembering.





### **KEEP STORIES AVAILABLE**

As the child grows, share age-appropriate stories and family history that help them know the person more fully. Save photographs, recordings, letters, recipes, meaningful objects, or written memories when possible so the child can return to them later.

### **LET THE CHILD CHOOSE HOW CONNECTION LOOKS**

- Some children want visible memorials; others prefer private connection. The form may change over time. A ritual that mattered at age eight may no longer fit at sixteen. Allow the bond to grow rather than requiring it to remain fixed.
- REMEMBERING DEVELOPMENT MATTERS
- At each stage, the child may understand both the person and the loss differently. Continue to welcome questions and memories. The relationship can gain new meaning even though no new experiences with the person are possible.

### **A THOUGHT TO CARRY WITH YOU**

The person who died can remain part of the child's story without becoming the ending. There are still chapters to be lived, loved, discovered, and written.

### **A MOMENT FOR REFLECTION**

**What quality, lesson, story, tradition, or memory does this child most want to carry forward? How can it become part of their life without becoming a burden or expectation?**

### **WHEN MORE SUPPORT MAY HELP**

**Additional support may be useful if the child feels unable to pursue their own life because of guilt, pressure to replace the person, fear of forgetting, or persistent distress that significantly interferes with development and daily functioning.**

### **A GENTLE CLOSING**

**The goal of grief support is not to help a child leave someone behind. It is to help them discover how love and memory can travel with them while they continue becoming who they are meant to be.**

What quality, lesson, story, tradition, or memory does this child most want to carry forward? How can it become part of their life without becoming a burden or expectation?

