

## **Talking to Kids About Violent Loss (Murder, Suicide, Drunk Driving):**

### Common Reactions of Children:

- Shock/Disbelief
- Fear/Terror
- Guilt
- Grief
- Confusion
- Shame
- Anger
- Loss of sense of safety and order in the world

### What Adults Can Do to Help:

1. LISTEN
2. Provide comfort, security and reassurance. For example, "It is my job as your mommy to do everything I can to keep you safe".
3. Provide structure and routine to decrease feelings of chaos in their world
4. Take care of yourself and try your best to model healthy coping. It is okay to show your emotions, but try to lean on supportive adults and try to display healthy eating, drinking and sleeping habits.
5. Don't overwhelm children with too much information and don't try to hide the truth from them. For a young child you might say: "A sad, terrible thing has happened that is not your fault. Daddy was walking to his car and a bad man shot him with a gun. Daddy was hurt very badly and he died." Monitor and respond to any questions the child asks.
6. Always ask the child if they have any questions and answer directly, honestly and listening carefully to the questions and their possible meanings.



7. Do not lie to your children – even about things you wish you could protect them from. Children need to know the adults that they love and trust will tell them the truth.
8. Reaching out to support groups may help you and your children.