

# Brought to you by *Connect with Kids*

F A M I L Y G U I D E

## LOST AND FOUND

*Topic: Coping with Death, Divorce, Loss*

### The Facts

- Today's children face many situations of grief and loss including the death of not only parents and grandparents, but also of young friends due to cancer, car wrecks, suicide and even murder. Children also feel the pain of loss from parents who are divorced or in jail. (Linda Goldman, Children's Grief and Loss Website)
- It is estimated that each year more than 2 million U.S. children under the age of 18 experience the death of a parent. (NYU Child Study Center)
- 10 to 15% of children and teens are at risk for adjustment problems in the first year after a loss, most likely in the form of depression. (NYU Child Study Center)

### Start a Conversation with Your Kids

1. Could you identify with Laura's story? How did it make you feel? Have you ever felt like Laura and been afraid to talk about it?
2. What did you learn about the normal emotions of grief? Have there been times when you have grieved something? Encourage your child by asking: If you ever feel a sense of loss, will you talk to me about it? How could I be most helpful?
3. If your child has recently suffered a loss, here is a suggestion from child experts about how to keep the lines of communication open. "I've noticed lately that you seem sad/angry. I was wondering if maybe you were missing (name of person or pet). I remember when I lost someone that I was very close to ... do you want to talk about it?"

### Advice From the Experts

- **Grieving is a process, not an event:** Make sure that you allow adequate time for your child to grieve in the manner that works best for him or her. Pressing your child to resume "normal" activities without the chance to deal with his/her emotional pain may prompt more problems later.
- **Don't assume your child will always grieve in an orderly or predictable way:** Everyone grieves in different ways. There is no "right" way to grieve.
- **Encourage your child to ask questions about loss and death:** Don't worry about not knowing all of the answers. Just do your best to be open and honest. Ask your clergy, teachers or counselors for help.
- **Let your child know that you really want to understand what he or she feels and needs:** Giving your child the time and encouragement to share his or her feelings may enable him or her to sort out those feelings.
- **Keep in mind that grieving is hard work:** The grieving period will be stressful for both you and your child.
- **Remember that grief is ongoing:** It never ends, but it does change in intensity. Grief is not a disease to be cured, but a process we learn to incorporate into our lives.

