

What About the Kids?

There's a lot to do when someone you love gets sick. On top of your regular responsibilities, it's likely that you are now providing care, handling practical matters, taking part in deep and difficult discussions, and hoping for a cure — all while experiencing strong and mixed emotions. So it's not surprising that the kids, whether they are grandchildren, siblings, or children of hospice patients, sometimes get lost in the shuffle.

That's why one of the questions we always ask HospiceCare patients and their loved ones is "What about the kids?"

The bad news is that when a loved one is dying, the overwhelming increase in family responsibilities and tension can cause children to feel lost and left out.

The good news is that even when children's worlds are disrupted, the involvement of relatives, friends, neighbors, teachers and other community members can help children to experience their lives as relatively normal.

We've learned that kids cope best when:

- Parents provide age-appropriate medical information and allow children to talk and ask questions
- Schools are aware when there is an illness in the family and teachers are sensitive and supportive
- Relatives or friends are able to provide support for routine activities like soccer games and music lessons

If your family doesn't have such support systems, HospiceCare can fill in some of the blanks. Our volunteers and social workers will spend time with the children — seeing movies and visiting parks, reading stories and drawing pictures. They'll engage in some activities that address your loved one's illness and the dying process and others that are pure play. The goals are to focus directly on the children, to build trust, and to provide a sense that the community legitimizes and supports your family's experience.

We're here to support your entire family, including the children. If you need help with your kids, please talk to your HospiceCare Team social worker. In the meantime, we hope it helps to know that in an atmosphere where information and feelings can be shared, questions asked, and needs assessed and met, your loved one's death doesn't have to negatively impact your children for life. This shared experience can lead to change and growth for all of you.

© 2006 HospiceCare of Boulder and Broomfield Counties



2594 Trailridge Drive East ■ Lafayette, CO 80026 ■ 303.449.7740 ■ www.HospiceCareOnline.org