

## Kids with Sadness during Christmas

Writer: Mark Jones

A couple of years ago my mother died on Christmas day. She bravely fought breast cancer for many years but the fight became too much and God gave her the victory of sharing in His glory and presence. Knowing her victory is the greatest comfort but the hard truth is, we all miss her very much. During the holidays I find myself more tearful than other times. I know our children are reminded and also struggle since Mom created and celebrated so many of our family traditions.



Dealing with her death became a challenge not only for me as a son but also as a dad. My children bring their questions and sadness as they grieve. What can a parent or teacher do to help with grieving children? Here are five ideas we have learned as we sought counsel in our grief.

1. Be honest- Let your children know that you miss Grandma. Explain why you miss her and it is fine to allow your kids to see you cry.
2. Plant a tree together. Make it a positive family activity. Everyone can help dig the hole. Place items like drawings the child creates, her necklace beads or any item the child desires in the hole to help the tree grow with love. These small items are filled with memories and together with water and sunshine, the tree can grow.
3. Artwork and Storytelling- These are still our family favorites. We laugh as we remember so many wonderful things together. This should happen all year long. Feel free to promote these stories.
4. Sudden Moments of Grief- Seems like the sadness comes on me in the most unusual places and times. I was preparing to attend an important meeting and as I drove up in the parking lot, the grief hit me. I began to cry and the knot in my throat was hurting. I said out loud, "Seriously? Now?" I just had myself a cry then dried it up. Went the bathroom to make sure I was presentable then went to the meeting. Your kids will have moments the same. It can be embarrassing so be a good listener. You might need to let teachers know so they can be sensitive. As a teacher, you can be compassionate by sending cards and simply reminding the child you remember and you are praying.
5. Answering Questions- There are questions kids will ask. The best rule is to be a listener. Sometime the questions will answer themselves. Sometimes the answers will come if you ask a question. Become comfortable with having a conversation that might end by saying, "I don't know." That is a perfectly fine answer.

What ideas would add to this list?

