Societal norms perpetuate the belief that children do not understand death or grieve in the same way adults do. When there is a death in a family or a community, it can be hard to find ways to talk to children about death, even though we want to help. To protect children, we may soften the details about the death and fall back on the assumption that they are “resilient”, “won’t remember,” or “don’t understand.”

Good Grief’s mission of supporting grieving children has proven that children do understand death and they do grieve. Children laugh at the memories, cry at the anniversaries, feel guilty for not doing more, regret their last interactions with the person who died, worry that others they love might also die, find unexpected similarities between themselves and their person, try to make sense of what has happened, and feel overwhelmed by the drastic changes that have taken place since their person is no longer here.

However, a child’s grief is very different from that of an adult. Because children typically cannot stay in a place of emotional intensity too long, they may appear not to be grieving at all. For some children, grief shows up in their behavior. Becoming withdrawn, isolated, aggressive, or overly affectionate are just a few examples of how a child’s grief may be present in their behavior.

Because everyone – including children – grieves differently, our program of support accommodates every child’s social and emotional response to grief. Good Grief volunteer facilitators go through in-depth training to better understand and respond to how a child’s age, culture, and life experience impacts their grief journey. Through art-based activities, guided conversations, and identifying commonalities and connections within their groups, our program helps kids find support, encouragement, and assurance that what they are feeling is normal.

One in eleven Ohio children will experience the death of a parent or a sibling by the age of 18. Which translates to more than 545,000 grieving children and teenagers in the state. In Lucas County alone, over 10,000 children and teenagers are grieving the loss of someone very close to them.

Adults have many supportive environments to accommodate their needs. Some of those groups include support for drug and alcohol abuse, parental support, and even grief support groups that exist strictly for adults. Children also need safe, healthy, and supportive environments to process their grief. The data listed above for grieving children in our state and county are staggering and, sadly, growing. The impact of the drug epidemic and most recently the deathly global pandemic means there are even more grieving young people in our community.

Children need to feel heard, encouraged, validated, and supported in their grief. Good Grief of Northwest Ohio provides this support and more to promote reassurance and guidance throughout their grief journey because it may change as they mature.

The right support at the right time helps kids find protective factors – supportive people, healthy activities, and positive coping skills - that will help them for the rest of their lives.

Together with our caring group of dedicated volunteers and stakeholders in the community, Good Grief of Northwest Ohio continues to work hard to encourage healthy conversations about grief and ways to support those who are grieving – especially children.

We welcome and invite your help in this work. Together we can build a community of hope, resilience, and support.