

How do Children Cope with Tragedy?

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David: Today I went to console my colleague who lost her Husband (40 yrs.) yesterday (due to massive Heart Attack), she is having 2 kids 5 years(Girl) and 9 years (Boy).

It was a shock for all of us in office and as Vedanta students it is understood that this is all to be accepted as God's will and need to surrender to him at duality level. God will take care, only thing we can do is to do our Dharma/Karma

What about the kids? who are so closed to their father, what would we say to them when they ask about their father?

Those moments when we were with our colleague in the morning, we were just helpless and painful, only thing I said was just have faith in Iswara who will take care.

Any suggestion, advise, what about kids? does kids karma comes into play?

Thanks, David

Sundari: It is very difficult to deal with tragedy as a jiva, and even more so for children who find it so hard to understand the loss of a loved one. As a karma yogi and inquirer, you know that nothing dies except the body, but this does not take the pain of loss go away, although it will, over time. Vedanta is not a magic pill for the ego. As the self of course, there is no death. Karma yoga shows us that the only sane way to live is to surrender all action to Isvara and take all results as prasad because we have no control over results. Everything is always working out in the big picture, even though that is hard to see when a young father dies unexpectedly leaving young children behind. Dying was his karma as his death is the karma of those who are 'left behind'.

For the children, the only way to help them is to try to explain karma yoga in the simplest way possible, telling them that their father is only physically gone from them, that he is with God and will always be with them, even though they will no longer see him. Unfortunately, children suffer terribly with these situations, but if you can somehow get them to see that everything that happens to us is part of a plan that ultimately takes us all to oneness, it will help them. Be straight forward and honest with them. Children are the self too and they are capable of understanding, even though they may not have the qualifications for self-inquiry.

A practice that will help the children is some form of devotion. Even if it is just lighting a candle every day for the father, put a picture up of him, maybe some sentimental items. Create an altar or sacred space where the children feel they can connect with him and speak to him. It can be a simple thing, just something they understand and to which they can relate. Also choose a symbol of the self for the altar; any religious or cultural background they are most familiar with is good. When children learn to pray and give thanks, it helps them to feel connected and comforted.

Send the whole family love, hold them in your mind and heart in the knowledge of our true oneness in the self.

I am sorry there is not more we can say that will help. Sadly, our attachment to people is a cause of sadness and pain, there is no way to make this fact disappear other than to see the sadness and suffering from the self's point of view, only apparently real. It may not immediately take the pain away for the jiva, but it certainly helps to make sense of it and in time, it will dissolve in the knowledge. Death is only a problem for the living, never the dead, because they know there is no death.

David: Thanks for your prompt response, I am sure all the suggestions by you will really help the Family & Kids to cope with the tragedy in a positive manner.

I will talk to them once they are done with all the rituals (12 days rituals, I think these rituals should help them to sink the truth) and update you on how it goes.

A response from You / James itself gives that extra confidence to me to talk to them. Thanks again.