



Compassionate Steps to Support Families Grieving a Child's Disability Diagnosis

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When a child is identified with a disability, families often experience a complex emotional journey. As a professional, caregiver, or educator, your support can make a meaningful difference. This checklist offers three actionable steps to provide compassionate, culturally responsive care, drawing on my expertise as a bilingual diagnostician.

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“When we listen with the intent to understand, we create a bridge to the hearts of families navigating a diagnosis.”

~Amy McCarthey

Step 1: Listen with Empathy

Families may feel shock, sadness, or uncertainty after a diagnosis. Listening with genuine empathy builds trust and validates their emotions.

- What to Do:
 - Create a safe space for families to share their feelings without judgment.
 - Use open-ended questions like, “How are you feeling about this news?” to encourage dialogue.
 - Acknowledge emotions in their preferred language (e.g., English or Spanish) to ensure understanding and comfort.
- Example:
 - Instead of saying, “It’ll be okay,” try, “I hear how overwhelming this feels. I’m here to help you through it.”
- Why It Matters:
 - Empathy shows families they’re not alone, fostering connection during a vulnerable time.





Step 2: Provide Clear Guidance

A diagnosis can feel overwhelming. Offering clear, concise information helps families process next steps without adding stress.

- What to Do:
 - Explain the diagnosis in simple terms, avoiding jargon, and confirm understanding.
 - For bilingual families, provide materials or explanations in their primary language(s).
 - Highlight strengths: Share how the child's abilities can shine with the right support.
- Example:
 - "This diagnosis means your child may need extra help with communication, but they're already showing great creativity. Here's one strategy we can start with..."
- Why It Matters:
 - Clear guidance empowers families to focus on possibilities, not just challenges.

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“If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn.”

~Ignacio Estrada



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Families are the experts on their children. Our job is to listen and learn from them.

~Ann P. Turnbull

Step 3: Build a Support Plan

Families thrive when connected to resources and a plan tailored to their needs. A thoughtful support plan promotes resilience.

- What to Do:
 - Suggest practical resources, like local support groups, bilingual therapists, or online tools.
 - Collaborate with families to set small, achievable goals for their child's growth.
 - Respect cultural values: For example, involve extended family if that's important to their dynamic.
- Example:
 - "Let's explore a support group in Spanish for parents, and I'll help you find activities to boost your child's confidence at home."
- Why It Matters:
 - A personalized plan gives families hope and a sense of control, honoring their unique journey.

Want to Learn More?

Supporting families through grief requires compassion and skill. Supporting Families When a Child is Identified with a Disability, to gain deeper insights and practical tools.

Visit www.learningmindsdiagnostics.com to stay connected and explore our services.



Julissa Romero, M.B.E.
Founder & CEO

I'm a bilingual diagnostician from Dallas, Texas, with over 25 years of experience supporting children and families in Texas schools. Certified in Bilingual Education and Special Education, I'm passionate about helping families navigate disability diagnoses with care. At LearningMinds Diagnostics, I provide tailored assessments to unlock every child's potential, building trust through empathy and expertise.

Thank you!

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Cassie Scott is a special education director with 20 years of experience in education, having also served as a special education teacher and educational diagnostician. With a strong foundation in special education law, trauma-informed care, and inclusive practices, Cassie excels at developing and implementing programs that empower students and staff alike. Her expertise spans legal compliance, program management, and staff development, ensuring that all initiatives align with district goals and student needs.

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