



Ask Dr Paulson:

Q. It seems in my family we don't talk enough about my sister who died six months ago. How can I get my family to open up and share stories, thoughts and feelings? I miss her so much and want to talk about her.

A. I am an advocate of talking about the pink elephant that is standing in the middle of the room! I would ask your parents that question directly first, and then talk about it as a family. Often a family is afraid that if they talk about their loved one, everyone will end up crying, and what started out to be a perfectly good day will end up with everyone in tears. This is particularly true early on, when everyone is trying so hard to just get through the day. As time goes on it gets easier. Sometimes kids have a hard time talking to their parents about their brother or sister, because then their parent falls apart and is then "unavailable" to them for the rest of the day. Other times parents are afraid to talk with their children, because they watched you go through such a rough time with things that they are afraid talking about it will cause a "set back". I would just say to them what you said to me: "I miss her so much, I want to talk about ...It brings me comfort to remember her, and continue to share her in our family."

"We Need Not Walk Alone", Summer 2006

Dr Paulson is a bereaved sibling & a child & adolescent psychologist