



Talking with and Supporting a Child after a Death

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- Acknowledge your own feelings about the loss so you can be emotionally available to grieving child. Get the support you may need.
- Acknowledge the child's feelings. The worst thing you can say is nothing.
- Find out what the child already knows about the death and what questions he/she might have. Provide simple, honest, accurate information, with respect and compassion.
- Watch for magical thinking or other misconceptions and counteract those by providing accurate information.
- Provide a safe place, literally, and figuratively, for the child to express different feelings about the loss.
- Accept that children's response to grief at times looks very different than adult's response. Allow the child to express their feelings about the loss in different way at different times.
- Use the real words: died, dying. Help child put words to feelings. Avoid euphemisms such as "gone away," "pass away," "sleeping," "lost."
- Use examples from nature to explain life cycles and death. Do not impose your philosophy of death on the child. Work toward teaching that death is irreversible and final (permanent) and ultimately inevitable (all living things eventually die).
- Provide reassurance: People usually die when they're very very old or very



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very sick. Expect to have to repeat explanations.

- Provide child with opportunities to talk, dictate and draw about the person who died or about the child's experience with regard to the death.
- Use this opportunity to teach the concept of community – how people care for one another during difficult times.