



Talking to Kids About Death



Overview

Death is one of the most painful things we deal with. And it may not be easy to find the right words to help a child cope with death. Here are some tips to help.

Tell the truth

First, tell the truth, and do it right away. Use the words "dead" or "died" instead of "passed away" or "lost." These may be hard words for you to say. But accurate words are helpful for a child. And don't feel that you need to hide your own grief. They should know it's normal to cry and feel sad.

Handling questions

Next, be prepared for questions. Answer them as truthfully as you can. You may want to avoid telling them too many details, or telling them things they don't need to know. And for some questions, you may not have a good answer. It's OK to say "I don't know."

Prepare them

If your child will soon visit a funeral home or attend a funeral or memorial service, talk to them about it. Tell them in detail what they will see so they're prepared for it.

The grieving process

And finally, know that kids have a wide range of emotional responses to death. They may cry, and it may be healing to cry with them. Or they may want to be alone. Some kids don't seem to show much emotion at all, and that's OK, too. Kids deal with death in different ways. There is no right way to grieve.