



Talking to Children About Death

Death is a difficult subject for most adults to talk about, so it can be extremely challenging for adults to talk to children about the subject. Below are a few ideas to help:

- Start the conversation before a death occurs. Death is a fact of life and you can look for teachable moments. For example, a dead squirrel in the road, a mention in a book or fairy tale, or if it happens on a TV show.
- Use the word "die". Avoid vague terms such as "passed away, loss, or going to sleep". Young children may be confused by these terms.
- Explain that when someone dies they cannot eat, sleep, play, talk, or do anything they could do before. The child may wonder if they are cold or hungry. Explain that their body no longer feels these things nor does it feel pain.
- Children may feel anxiety that something will happen to you or someone else they love. Do not promise them that nothing will happen. You might say, "I will do my best to stay healthy and stay around a long time, but if something were to happen...." Tell them who will care for them.
- You may want to convey your beliefs and faith. However, remember these can be confusing to young children and they may ask many questions.