

## Kids and Funerals/Memorial Services

Kids and Funerals/Memorial Services As adults, we often wish we could protect children from sad and tragic events. Thus, when a friend or loved one of a child dies sometimes adults wonder if children should attend the funeral or memorial service.

Children should be given a choice whether they wish to attend a funeral. Giving children choices displays respect and compassion. Children that are not allowed to attend a funeral may feel “robbed” of their opportunity to say goodbye. Alternatively, children that feel forced to attend a funeral may feel angry and resentful.

Children may want to participate in the planning of the funeral or memorial service. Many children will welcome the chance to have input. They may have a song they want played or a favorite poem or verse read. Some children may want to speak at the service. Do not force it, but the many children feel proud to be a part of these services for their person.

If a child makes the choice to attend a funeral, they must be prepared for what they will see and hear and then lovingly supported during the event. Give clear, direct, and concrete explanations and cover the “basics”, such as:

- Who will be at the funeral?
  - Let the child know that people may be sad and crying. Remind them that tears are natural and can help people feel better.
- What kind of things will happen at the funeral?
- Where will the service/funeral be held?
- When is the funeral going to be held?
- Why do we have a funeral?
  - A funeral or memorial is important to people because they want to honor the life of the person who died and come together to support one another.
- Will the casket be open or closed or has the person been cremated?
  - If open, remember giving young children a reminder that about the basics of death and the person is not “asleep”.
- If there is no body, but the person has been cremated. Offer an explanation about cremation. (See cremation resource)

A funeral or memorial service of a loved one may be a part of a child’s memories for the rest of their lives. Caring and supportive adults can assist a child during this experience so that children feel cared for and not forgotten amid adults’ grief.