

TALKING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN ABOUT DEATH

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Has your child experienced the death of a loved one?

Helping a young child to understand and cope with death can be challenging for parents.

Here are some tips that you might find helpful when speaking with your young child about death:

- It's important to speak with your child honestly, using age-appropriate language.
- Be careful of your wording. Saying that a loved one has 'passed away' or that you have 'lost' someone can be confusing for young children.
- Death is a very difficult concept for children to understand so taking the time to answer all their questions is very important.
- Don't be afraid to speak about your loved one who has died. Frequent conversations about your relative and their death are more helpful for children than one long and detailed explanation.
- Some families find it useful to make photo 'memory books', plant a special tree or to commemorate their relative in some other way - perhaps you could ask your child for his/her ideas about this?
- Read books on this subject with your child which can help normalise this experience and bring comfort and understanding. A list of children's books that deal with the topic of bereavement and loss can be found here: <http://www.littleparachutes.com/subcategory.php?sid=1>.
- Don't lean on your child for help or comfort. You may need your own support through this sad time and it's important that you don't add to the stress experienced by your child.

Children often find the death of a family member or friend difficult to adjust to. Sometimes this is reflected in children's moods, sleep, appetite and behaviour.

Children need our patience and understanding as they struggle to come to terms with the permanent nature of their loss.



If you or your child are struggling to cope with a death of a loved one, it's best to seek professional help. When children learn helpful coping strategies to assist them in dealing with stressful situations such as grief, they acquire useful skills that they can use throughout their lives.

To find out more about Dr Kaylene Henderson and her popular resources, go to: www.drkaylenehenderson.com. Or to download her online Advice Packs on a range of topics such as anxiety, resilience, school readiness and tantrums, head to A Dose of Awesomeness: www.adoseofawesomeness.com.