

Tips on how to talk to your child about death

Talking is the most important tool in helping your child through the grief process.

When you first tell your child about the death, be in a position where you are touching each other. Children need a lot of touching to feel secure.

It's important to talk about the death right from the beginning. Talk about what happened. Talk frequently and be ready to talk about it whenever your child is. (Children are often ready to talk at unusual times and places.)

Answer each question with simple, honest words.

Answer only direct questions. Don't give unnecessary information and details, unless child asks.

Use the correct words (e.g., "Grandpa died," not-. , "Grandpa went on a long trip" or "went to sleep forever.")

Be open and honest - especially with your emotions and share your feelings- "I'm very sad." (Allowing children to see you sad or see you cry will teach them that these feelings are appropriate and it's ok to have them.) Be explicit about why you feel as you do (e.g., "Grandpa died." "I miss him.")

Give hugs of reassurance.

Allow your child to ask the same questions more than once. (Children often need to, to process the information.)

Some children feel more comfortable talking about uncomfortable topics when they are engaged in an activity (e.g. • playing play dough, coloring, cooking, doing yard work.)

Don't pass the child's fears as inappropriate. They are real to him/her.