

Children and Death

How to talk to a child about death

- Encourage the child to talk openly about feelings
- Allow expression of feelings
- Support expression of emotions appropriate to grief and death
- Help children deal with their feelings and emotions

Telling a child about a loss

- First thing, to communicate through touch
 - arm around child
 - sit close to child
 - hold on lap
 - hold hands
- Talk about things the child has experienced or noticed already
 - pregnancy
 - father and/or mother crying, worried, sad
 - mother in hospital
- Encourage/allow child to ask questions
- Include adult reality
- Tell child what to expect
- Strengthen positive memories
- Acknowledge and share your feelings
- Explain death in an understandable manner (simply and honestly)
- When appropriate, let child make the decision to attend/not attend the funeral

Children with unmet needs might:

- regress
- develop somatic symptoms
- fear impending death
- express anxiety in their behavior

Visible reactions of children

(positive and negative behaviors can increase)

- anxiety attacks
- bed wetting
- nightmares
- upsurge of aggressiveness
- stuttering
- running away
- death phobias
- separation anxiety
- sudden outburst of fear and hatred of the mother
- suicide attempts
- more loving, concerned, cuddly
- more attentive to parents'/siblings' needs
- fearful, angry, withdrawn

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