

Talking with your child about a death or loss

What is your favourite memory of (Insert Name)?

What do you think we can do to remember (Insert Name)?

It's okay to be upset and express how you feel in front of me.

Everybody copes with losing someone differently – what is helping you at the moment?

What can I do to comfort you?

Do you understand what happened to (Insert Name) - would you like me to explain what happened?

Conversation Starters

Is there anything that you feel may help you at the moment?

Do you feel a little bit confused about how you are feeling?

How would you like to say goodbye to (Insert Name)?

Are you worried about something happening to someone else that you care about?

Would you like to talk about what happens when someone dies?

Would you like to talk about (Insert Name)?

Following the Conversation

1. Validate how they're feeling.
2. Praise them for being honest about how they're feeling.
3. Offer empathy.
4. Reassure them that the way they are grieving is normal.
5. Reassure them that they have other sources of support, whilst still acknowledging their loss.



Talking with your child about a death or loss

Tips and Advice

- 1. Be open and honest with your child.** Explain, age-appropriately, why the person died.
- 2. Answer all the difficult questions about death and loss** even though it is likely to be painful and uncomfortable. It's okay to not have all of the answers, feel comfortable in saying you don't know.
- 3. Listen to your child's experience of the death.** Reassure them if they blame themselves for what has happened – this is common.
- 4. Don't be afraid to express your own emotions.** By showing grief you are encouraging your child to express theirs too.
- 5. Use clear language when talking about death.** We can all find it difficult to say the words and have a tendency to use softer expressions such as “gone away or gone to sleep”. These expressions can be confusing for young children as they may believe loved ones will come back or become fearful of falling asleep themselves.
- 6. Do not feel like you have to divulge lots of information** about the bereavement at once, as this can be overwhelming for both you and your child. Be guided by your child's questions as this will inform you about what they are curious or uncertain of.
- 7. Be prepared for your child to continuously ask the same questions.** Going over and over it can help them to process their loss and gain reassurance.
- 8. Take care of yourself.** Allow yourself time and space to grieve for your own loss. The more you look after yourself, the better able you will be to support your child.

