

## Tips for talking with Your Children About Death and Loss

Children often need to hear the information again or may ask the same questions repeatedly. Remind them that they can always ask questions if they don't understand.

- Use simple language and speak frankly about the loss.
- Accept their unwillingness to talk. Children will talk when they are ready.
- Keep talking with your children. Tell them it is ok to ask questions.
- Reassure them that you are always there to listen and answer questions and hear their worries. Let them know that it is important to set aside their worries and continue with activities that they enjoy without feeling guilty.

Children will ask questions about death and dying. It is important to talk with your children truthfully about death and loss. Children need to be reassured that they will be cared for and supported no matter what happens.

It is common to feel awkward when trying to comfort your child when they have difficult questions about dying. Many people do not know what to say or do.

### What to Say

Acknowledge the situation "This is really hard to talk about but I will try to answer your questions and I am open to talk about how you really feel."

Express your concern "I am sorry this has happened to your friend and their family. "

Be genuine in your communication "I am not sure what to say, but I want you to know that I am here and I care."

Offer your support "Is there something I can do to help?"

### What to Do

Ask how they feel, don't assume you know how your child feels on any given day

Monitor your own emotional state. If you are feeling overwhelmed with your own emotions, it may not be the time to provide comfort.

Be there, even if you do not know what to say, just having someone near can be comforting

Listen when they want to talk. Accept whatever feelings are being expressed.

Provide reassurance and acknowledge how hard times like this can be.

Avoid telling them to be strong or brave. This puts pressure on them to withhold feelings and to act strong.

Ask your child if they would like to do something for the person who lost their family member, making a card sending a letter, or painting a picture for the person they care about can help the child process how they are feeling.

Please contact our school counselor for more information and support.