

Tips for Parents and Caregivers

- Choose the best time and place to talk to your child. Choose an environment in which your child feels comfortable, a space that is conducive to conversation, and a time when you can devote your undivided attention to your child. Gently invite conversation by asking, “Is there anything you learned at school today that is scary or confusing?”
- Be honest about the death, using simple language that is easily understood. Example: “Because the disease couldn’t be stopped, the person got very sick; his/her body stopped working.”
- Focus on what the child needs to know. A good rule of thumb is to always consider whether you are giving more information than the child wants or needs to hear. Be general.
- Give information in small amounts over time and allow the child to process what they have been told.
- Encourage your child to express his/her feelings and be open to accepting whatever your child wishes to express. Accept and talk about what you are feeling and your child will be encouraged, by your example, to do the same. Model feeling expression for your child by sharing that this loss is difficult for adults to understand too.
- Let your child know that it is OK to talk about the death. The subject of loss should be as open as possible, not something that is hidden or not discussed. Let your child know that you are available to answer questions and to hear any expression of loss.
- Allow the child to express memories, recollections, and stories of the person who died.
- Remember that adults are role models for grieving children. Accept and talk about what you are feeling and your child will be encouraged, by your example, to do the same.
- The four most important concepts adults should remember when helping children understand about and cope with death are:
 1. Be truthful
 2. Be loving
 3. Be accepting
 4. Be consistent



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