



Talking about funerals and memorials...

Isn't it better to avoid these topics with a child so you don't frighten her?

Although your child may not completely understand these rituals, allowing and encouraging her to ask questions and be involved in the planning helps her experience an important life event. By giving her simple, concrete information, you will ensure that she does not have to use her imagination to make sense of what is happening.

How do I explain what a funeral or memorial is?

You can start by explaining the purpose of the event. Usually it is to honour the life of the person who died and a way for friends and family to publicly share their grief. After that, describe what the room will look like; who will be there; what they will do and so forth. Use simple, concrete language. Answer only what is asked. Don't over-answer.

It is also wise to tell her that she may see people crying or laughing and that you might cry. Reassure her that you will stop crying and that it is okay to feel sad for awhile. Explain that people usually talk quietly or whisper at funerals or memorials. Tell her about the music and the other things that will happen.

How can she be involved in the funeral or cremation?

Depending on the age of your child, you may include her in planning the event. Ask her to choose some music for the memorial or if she would like to write a letter or draw a picture she can place in the coffin. Sometimes children will want to bring something to give to the person who died such as a memento of something that they did together.

Should I force her to attend the funeral or memorial?

Make sure that she understands all this information and is reassured that, even though it may be difficult, there will be someone to help her through it. At that point, if she decides not to attend, don't force her to. You might suggest that she create her own way to honour the person who died.

If she does choose to attend, have a trusted adult standing by who can leave with her if she needs to leave so that you will be able to stay and participate.

What about after the funeral or memorial?

Remember that the child had a relationship with the person who died so she will experience grief just like the rest of the family. Families who openly talk about the person and share stories and fond memories will help their children see healthy ways to work through the grief.

