



Talking about death...

Won't it frighten my child to talk about death?

Children have a natural curiosity about their world. They will ask you what death means and what would happen in your family if someone dies. It is healthier to be open about the topic than to leave your child's imagination to come up with an answer.

What if I get upset when we're talking?

If you feel sad and cry, tell your child that this is natural but you won't feel this sadness all the time. Tell them that it is okay for them to feel sad and express their feelings too.

How do I do this?

Use simple, concrete language that your child will understand. Answer only what they ask you. Here is an example of a parent telling a child about their grandfather's death.

Parent: Honey, you know that Gramps was very sick in the hospital. Last night, he died.

Child: What does died mean, Mommy?

Parent: It means that he stopped breathing and his heart stopped beating. He isn't sleeping so he won't wake up. Grandpa won't ever move again.

Child: Why, Mommy?

Parent: Because his body doesn't work anymore.

Child: Mommy, I don't want him to be dead.

Parent: I know you don't and I don't either but we can't change that. Everything that lives will die someday.

Child: (crying) I'll miss Gramps. I love him.

Parent: We will all miss him. That's why your Daddy and I are crying. It's okay to be sad and cry because you love Gramps. We can be sad together anytime we want. Being sad won't last forever but we'll always remember Gramps and how much we love him.

Answering only what the child asks and using simple language will help the child understand. Allowing open conversation will let the child know that they can share their feelings and worries with you no matter what.

