



## TALKING ABOUT DEATH WITH CHILDREN

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This is a time for parents to decide if they have religious beliefs they want to pass on regarding death (using words like heaven, spirit, etc.)

Children at this age are very concrete, black and white thinkers and you should speak very honestly and simply. Stay away from abstract concepts as much as possible. Be aware not to frighten children unnecessarily about dying themselves.

Your child may express her feelings or questions right away, many days, weeks or months later.

At a quiet time when you are all together you could say:

"Something very sad has happened .....has died. Her body stopped working properly and she died." (stop after this and wait and see if she has any questions). It is important to express your own feelings of sadness and allow your child to express her feelings. If you cry this is okay and you can say, "I am crying because I love ..... so much and I will miss her."

It is important not to say too much or give too much information. Usually after your opening comment a child will ask questions which you can answer simply or say, "That is a good question, what do you think?" This way you find out what she is thinking before you add more information. You usually just end up correcting any misconceptions.

Children will worry that the same thing could happen to their parent or to themselves. It is then important to say, "People usually live for many, many years like Grandma and Grandpa."

If you talk about this simply and honestly without whispering or adding fear to the equation, your child should be fine. She could be frightened for a while but if you are open and honest about talking about feelings, it should pass. Some children enjoy making a memory box with photos and small treasures to help remember the person they've lost.

Our school has a book that may be borrowed for ideas: Someone Special Died by Joan Singleton Prestine.

<http://www.babycenter.com.au/preschooler/difficultsubjects/death/>  
[http://www.cc.nih.gov/cc/patient\\_education/pepubs/childeath.pdf](http://www.cc.nih.gov/cc/patient_education/pepubs/childeath.pdf)