



WHEN CHILDREN ASK, "WHY...?"

By Georgia Bowen

When children ask those sticky questions, such as: "Where do babies come from?" "Why doesn't he have arms and legs?" "Why did Grandma die?" and "Where is she now?"

The best response is, "That's an interesting question, what do you think?"

This way, you find out what your child is thinking, their level of understanding, and their possible misconceptions.

Usually, you can then simply correct their errors without elaborating further. If you don't find out what they think first, you may be adding new information onto the old, and then what they think can become even more confusing.

A child usually already has an answer to their question and is cross-checking with you. So, find out what they think first.

This also helps you to keep your conversation at their developmental level of understanding without overloading them with too much information beyond what they are ready for. As you know, they will continue to ask for more information if they need more.

What is important is developing thinking skills, not pasting on information. So let children ask questions, learn to brainstorm for answers to their questions, and introduce them to various methods of finding answers in books, the library, other people or the internet. Parents transition from being their child's "problem solver" to their child's "sounding board". You facilitate the development of their ability to think through issues and develop problem solving skills, rather than learning to depend on adults for answers.