



Informing a Child of a Death

First, take a moment to absorb the information yourself before informing your children. When you tell your children about a death, consider the following:

- Use the words “*dead*” and “*death*”.
- Young children do not fully understand what “*dead*” means, so explain it like this:
 - * Something **physically** happened to cause the death, keep it simple and not too graphic, such as “the **fall** caused Bob’s heart to stop.”
 - *Be clear that the deceased will **not** be coming back. Death is **permanent** and **irreversible**.
- Limit the information you share, you can always **add** information, but you **cannot** take it away.
- As they struggle to make sense of the news, tell them that you are still working on getting more information.
- Be open to questions; be present, honest and available. If you don’t know the answer, **say** you don’t know.
- Focus on how they feel, both emotionally and physically.
- Discuss the possible physical and emotional effects such as changes in sleep, appetite, focus or numbness.

The first few days are crucial, take care of each other:

- Keep routines.
- Create opportunities to be together.
- Share how you feel. Keep the door open for discussion and the sharing of information especially about emotions.
- Offer comfort such as physical proximity, hugs or just touching.
- Show respect for how different people might deal with their emotions.
- Show respect for individual privacy.
- Reassure them about their *and* your safety, but don't make promises you cannot keep.
- Share stories about the person who died.
- Include children in memorial/funeral service planning and keep them up to date with any new information.
- Seek support from school, The Children's Grief Centre or other organizations.

Presented by the Children's Grief Centre
and The Calgary Police Service.

For more information visit:

www.childrengriefcentre.ca

403.263.4525 or

Calgary Police Service Victim Support Team 403.428.8398