



## 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.



# Children's Grief Centre

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*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 Victim Assistance Support Team

For more information:

Children's Grief Centre

[www.childrengriefcentre.ca](http://www.childrengriefcentre.ca)

403.263.4525

Victim Assistance Support Team

403.428.8398