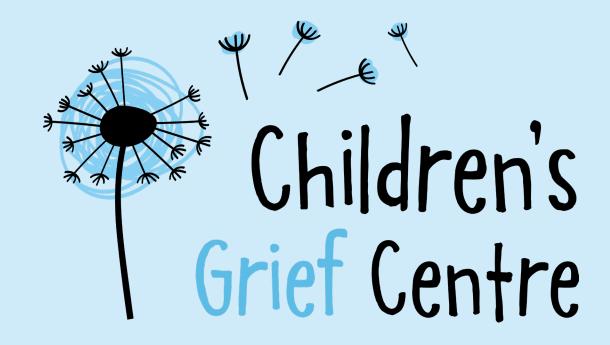


Informing a Child of a Death

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.



Informing a Child of a Death

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.childrensgriefcentre.ca

403.263.4525
Victim Assistance Support Team

403.428.8398