



For Further Information Contact:

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Eurobodalla Palliative Care Service

Children and Loss



DIVISION OF GENERAL PRACTICE LTD

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Helping Children Under Five

To help children under the age of 5 years of age understand death and to eliminate fears:

Talk with children, listen to them to tell if they are developing ideas about death that are incorrect. Continue these discussions for weeks and months following a death.

Read to children about death.

Assure children that they did not cause the death. Encourage them to act out scenes with dolls so you can better understand how they think about death.

Avoid taking children under the age of four to funerals.

Make sure that children receive assurance and attention in the time surrounding funerals.

Do not replace immediately pets that have died. Have a memorial service and help children understand the loss. It is by grieving for the loss that children come to understand death.

Continue the same household rules and structures around the time of death since

Children and Youth

Know when to get professional help

Most questions and concerns of children can be worked out by family members or friends. A few clues might tell you what children or teenagers are having unusual problems whether it is dealing with watching the person grow more ill, with the idea of the funeral, or even with death itself. This is when professional help can make a difference.

Call on professionals such as teachers, school psychologists, ministers, social workers, hospital or community health staff who have helped you, if young people are doing any of the following:

Having trouble sleeping

Showing disruptive behaviour at school

Doing poorly at school, if this is a change

Acting differently, such as being quiet and sad when before they were happy and talkative

If you do not know how to handle certain situations and want to talk them over with someone other than family members.

Answer concerns about death and dying

Young people's questions about death can be surprising, and they may challenge you at a time when you are tired and trying to make many decisions. The following suggestions may help you to handle questions during the days immediately surrounding the death:

Find someone who will listen to the children's concerns about dying and what happens after death

Use pictures, dolls or books with young children
Suggest that an older child talk with someone outside the family

Be prepared for tough questions about life after death

Be prepared for tough questions about what happens to the body

Answer all questions

Remind children that it is no one's fault when someone dies.

Share decisions about who goes to funerals or memorial services

Ask for help making decisions about children attending services or for help looking after them, either at services, at home, or at someone else's house.

Ask young people if they want to go to the service.

Ask young people before the service how they are feeling about what is happening.

Let them change their minds.

Remind yourself as well as them that it is the memory of the person's life, not the person's death, that is important.

Expect struggles with grief both now and in the future