

## Explaining funerals, burial, and cremation to children – Part 1

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Parents are often concerned about how to best support the needs of their children following the death of someone close. It is natural to want to protect them from hurt or upset. However, sheltering children from the truth, may lead to further pain and confusion.

Our experience has shown us that talking openly and honestly with children about death and the funeral process creates a strong foundation of trust which enables children to ask questions and to explore their fears or concerns.

Children are remarkably resilient and if well supported, will often bring a natural curiosity and acceptance to end of life topics. When speaking to children about death and funeral care, it is important to choose language that is age appropriate and to communicate with them in an honest and consistent way.



Children may start by asking direct questions or talking repeatedly about the person who has died. This is ok. Be guided by their questions, answer them honestly and simply. Children tend to build on layers of grief and have more questions as they grow older and understand death in different ways. We invite you to grow with them.

Don't be afraid of children seeing your tears or sadness. Grief is a normal, healthy response to the death of someone we have loved. Being honest about your feelings, gives your children permission to be honest with you about theirs. Children often have a way of getting direct to the heart of grief with their questions, it can be painful and at a time when you least expect it.

If you feel overwhelmed or uncomfortable about speaking to your children about these topics, its ok to ask another trusted person (family member, friend, social worker or counsellor) to help you with these conversations to ensure they happen.

On the following factsheet are some commonly asked questions about funerals, burial and cremation from children and some answers we hope can offer you guidance in your conversations with them.

### Book recommendations for children

#### Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant death

*You could have been* - Annie-M & Zheng Qu (3yrs+)

*Born to fly* - Tamara J Whittaker (3yrs +)

#### Death of a Sibling

*My Brother* - Dee, Oliver & Tiffany Huxley (3yrs +)

#### Grief support for Children

*Something very sad happened: A toddler's guide to understanding death* - Bonnie Zucker & Kim Fleming (2yrs+)

*The Invisible String* - Patrice Karst (3 yrs +)

*The Memory Tree* - Britta Teckentrup (3yrs +)

*The Golden Thread* - Amelia Donnelly (3yrs +)

#### Teaching Children about Death

*I Miss You: A first look at death* - Pat Thomas (3 yrs+)

*Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children* - Bryan Mellonie (5 yrs +)

*Life and I: A Story about Death* - Elisabeth Helland Larsen & Marine Schneider (5yrs +)