



when families grieve™



The memory of
your loved one
can live on
in the hearts
of your family.

key content for families Handling the death of a parent is difficult for both children and adults. When talking to children, it is best to be honest about what happened. Below are some tips that may help families begin to address children's concerns about the death:

- When it happens, explain what death is. For example, you could say, "When a person dies, their body stops moving, breathing, and eating."
- As you talk with children, use terms that are direct and explicit, such as, "died" and "dead." Although "asleep," "lost," or "passed away" might feel safer and gentler, children may get confused. For example, children might not understand the difference between the loss of a ball that can be found again, and the loss of a parent.
- Children might need help understanding the permanence of death.
- "Who will take care of me?" may be a major worry for children. Reassure them that someone will always be there from the wide net of people in their lives.
- Remind children that what happened was not their fault.
- Children may ask the same question over and over again, which is very typical. These questions may reflect the child's need for extra reinforcement. Try to be patient and consistent in your answers.
- If you don't have an answer to one of your child's questions, it's okay to say, "I don't know," or "I'll have to think about that one." Your family or religious traditions may also influence the answers you give.
- Children might work through many conflicting feelings about what happened. They might feel anger, sadness, frustration, loneliness, and other emotions. Reassure them that it is okay to feel many different ways.
- Always encourage children to keep positive memories.

