



HOW TO TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT DEATH



Young children often don't fully understand what death means, but they can still sense when something sad or worrying has happened. They may show their feelings through behaviour rather than words.

Use simple, clear, truthful language

Children need very concrete explanations.

"I have something very sad to tell you... **died this morning."

"When someone dies, this means that their body stopped working, their heart stopped beating, they won't wake up - but also this means they are not in any pain"

Avoid phrases like "gone to sleep," "passed away," "we lost them," as they can be confusing or frightening.

Reassure them about safety

Young children often worry it could happen to other people they love. Something like:

"You are safe. We are here with you. When someone dies, it's very sad but it doesn't mean anyone else is going to die today...it is okay to feel sad/angry about this, I feel sad too."

A cuddle, sitting together, or holding their hands provides comfort and closeness. It can help them feel safe.

Keep it short, then pause

Children take in information in tiny pieces - like a jigsaw puzzle.

Say a simple sentence, allow them time, then wait for their questions or reactions.

They may:

- Cry
- Ask practical questions ("Where are they now?")
- Carry on playing
- Not seem to understand at first
- Say something that sounds blunt
- Move quickly between tears and normal activity

All of these are completely normal. This doesn't mean they don't care, it's just how their brains protect them

Let them ask the same questions over and over.

Repetition helps them make sense of something so big.

You can answer simply each time.

