



Grief & Loss Discussion Guide

In our broken world, death is part of life. The loss of a loved one—whether it's a grandparent, pet, or someone else—can be devastating to a child. How children react and process the vast, new feelings that come with death can set the tone for their emotional health for many years to come. Here's some guidance for navigating this conversation with your child:



Ask gentle questions. Your child likely won't want to discuss their feelings because it's painful. When right, gently and lovingly spend time with your child and ask how they feel. They'll likely need time to discover their true and complicated emotions.

Conversations happen when kids want them to, not when we want them to. You might want to talk to them right after the funeral – they might have other plans. They could bring it up during a conference call at work, while you're making dinner, or on a drive. Treat their feelings as real, no matter how small the circumstance or urgency seems.

Point to the hope in Jesus. Death was not part of God's original design – God desires to live with us forever. God knows what it's like to lose someone He loved. He sent His Son Jesus to Earth to save us, knowing that Jesus would have to die for our sins to be forgiven. God promises to one day “wipe away every tear” (Revelation 21:4) and that He “causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God” (Romans 8:28). God also says that He is “close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed” (Psalm 34:18). One day in heaven, we will be reunited with those that put their trust in Jesus and we will live with them forever. Everything will one day be perfect when God makes all things new. He can be hopeful that our pain and sadness will not last forever.

Be honest. Provide accurate and age-appropriate information to help them process and build trust. For example, avoid saying, “We won't see grandpa for a while,” or “He went to sleep,” but instead say directly and lovingly, “Grandpa died, and we won't see him again on Earth, and that's really sad.”. Delaying in talking about death can do more harm than good. Remember it's okay to say, “I don't know,” for any difficult questions. Explore the answers together and research Scripture for God's truth.

Show them how to grieve. Jesus lived a perfect life and showed us what it was like to be sad. When His friend Lazarus died, Jesus wept (John 11:35). We can show our kids when we are sad, and our Savior led the way in that for us. Be open and honest with them, showing them that it's okay to be sad and even angry when someone dies.

