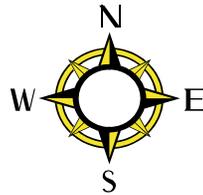


Suggested Resources

Hospice has several publications on how to help children when a loved one is dying or has died. This series is called Navigating Your Grief. It includes:

- Answering Children's Questions about Dying and Grief
- How to Help Children When Someone Special is Dying
- Preparing Children to Attend Calling Hours and Funerals
- Resources for Grieving Children
- Sharing Sad News with Children
- Ten Things Everyone Should Know about Grieving Children

The material for the *Navigating Your Grief Series* came from Hospice and Palliative Care of St. Lawrence Valley and has been edited and reprinted with their permission.



Compass Points

High Peaks Hospice: Essex County
PO Box 192
Port Henry, NY 12974
518-942-6513
800-639-8045

High Peaks Hospice: Tri-Lakes
19 Church Street
Saranac Lake, NY 12983
518-891-0606
877-324-1686

High Peaks Hospice: Warren County
79 Glenwood Ave., 2nd Floor
Queensbury, NY 12804
518-743-1672
800-730-9477

Answering Children's Questions About Dying & Grief

Compass Points:
Navigating Your Grief
Series



High Peaks Hospice & Palliative Care, Inc.

Essex County
800-639-8045

Tri-Lakes
877-324-1686

Warren County
800-730-9477

Answering Children's Questions About Dying and Grief

Children are curious by nature. When someone is dying or has died, they have lots of questions. Those questions help kids find their way through their grief. Answering them as honestly and concretely as possible gives your child a steady reference point for adjusting to their new life and moving on.

Understand that it is normal for children to ask the same questions over and over again. Be sure to ask the child to explain what they want to know. Keep your answers brief and concrete. Always tell the same story each time the child asks. The repetition helps reinforce the reality of the event and will help reduce your child's confusion and anxiety.

Here are some typical questions children ask adults, along with some possible answers that you can use to shape your response.

"Why is Daddy dying?"

- "Daddy has a special kind of illness that is slowly making his body stop working."

"Why did Grandma die?"

- "Grandma's body stopped working. She can't feel, hear, sleep, talk, move, eat, or play with you anymore."

"Why did we put Grandpa in a box and then bury him in the ground?"

- "When someone dies, we bury them in a box called a casket. The casket is buried in the ground in a place called a cemetery."

"Susie says that Max the cat is a ghost and will come back to haunt me. What does that mean?"

- "There are scary movies about ghosts haunting people, but they are pretend stories. Remember when a person or animal is dead they can't move, sleep, eat, talk, or walk."

"Where do people go when they die?"

- "There are many different beliefs about where people go when they die. What does your family believe?"
- "Our family believes..." (and share your family's beliefs about the afterlife).
- "It is important for you to respect everyone's beliefs, even if they differ from ours."

"Why did God let Grandpa die?"

- "Everyone who is born will also die. People and animals are not meant to live forever. No one knows exactly how long our lives will be."

"Will I die?"

- "Yes, you will, but hopefully not for a very long time."

"What is a funeral?"

- "A funeral is a special time when family and friends come together to say good-bye to the person who died and to tell the family they were sorry to hear that they died."

"What is cremation?"

- "Cremation is a way of turning a dead body into soft ash. The body is taken to a place called a crematory. The crematory puts the body in a room with a special kind of hot heat that turns the body into soft ash. The ashes are placed in a jar called an urn and returned to the family. Remember, when people are dead they can't feel anything, not even the heat."

"What is suicide?"

- Children need to be told the truth about this kind of death because it allows them to begin the long process of learning to live without this person. Sharing details of how they died is not necessary. Simply state, "He or she died of suicide," and follow up with the explanation below. Remember, it's far better for children to hear this news from a trusted adult than to overhear it.
- "Suicide is when someone kills him or herself on purpose. There is no way to know why someone chooses to do this. It is very sad and leaves friends and family very sad and confused."