

Talking About Death

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Talking About Death

(Two and one-half hour lesson)

Program Description

Parents cannot shield their children from grief and loss, but they can help them cope with it. Death is one of the few certainties of life that we must accept, however, it is still difficult for parents to explain the grieving process of death to children. This program will give parents ideas and resources to help them provide answers to a child's questions about death.

Program Objectives:

- Participants will learn strategies to discussing death.
- Participants will understand the different ways children view death.
- Participants will explore ways of helping children prepare for death.
- Participants will identify available resources to help children cope with death.

Intended Audience: Parents and other care-givers of children

Materials Needed:

- Extension publications
- Handouts
- Overhead projector and transparencies

Topics and Time Frame:

Introduction / Ice Breaker.....	5 minutes
Discussion of Death Experiences.....	20 minutes
How Children React to Death.....	30 minutes
Break.....	10 minutes
Coping With the Reality of Death.....	30 minutes
When Death Strikes.....	30 minutes
Questions/ Answers.....	15 minutes
Evaluation.....	5 minutes

Introduction

Introduce yourself and then have participants briefly introduce themselves. Give a short overview of the lesson.

Overview

What is death? Webster's dictionary says that death is the end of life, a permanent cessation of all vital functions. Probably some of you have a different definition or different reactions to death. This program will cover the different ways children react to death, preparation for a possible death, and what to expect after a death.

Key Concepts

- iHelp parents overcome any fears they personally may have about discussing death
- iUnderstand how children accept, relate, and react to death differently

Discussion of Death Experiences

Each participant is given the opportunity to share with the group an experience with death that made an impression on their lives. Open and sharing group discussion will encourage participants to overcome hesitancy and fear of discussing death.

NOTE: Use the Death Attitude Scale as a pre & post test, if desired. Discuss in dyads.

How Children React to Death

As adults, we all handle death differently. It is the same with children. Children's reactions to death depend upon their age, their relationship to the lost one, how prepared they are for it, and the response to people around them.

Children grieve more often than adults (transparency #1)

- Children who are grieving the death of a loved one will experience that grief over many years.
- They will be in touch with their grief especially when big events occur in their lives such as making the honor roll, earning a merit badge, winning a swimming competition or even their first date.
- This grieving process will continue even as they advance into adulthood, reminding them of what they have lost as they approach major milestones such as graduation from high school and college, marriage and birth of babies---all moments they would have wanted to share with that person who died when they were young.

Putting grief aside (transparency #2)

- Because the emotion of grief is so hard for them to handle, children will often focus for a time on something pleasant.
- When a young boy was told of his father's death, he responded with, "Can I have a bicycle?" Later explaining that he wanted to think of something "fun" something to divert the pain that he was feeling.
- This is not atypical of children confronting such harsh reality.

Preschoolers cannot comprehend the concept of "forever" (transparency #3)

- Children believe that death is reversible. Take a cartoon character that children watch. The animal character is smashed or thrown off a cliff, in fact killed, only to bounce back to life in the next segment, looking no worse than before.
- Television will have a character today playing a certain role, die, and come back tomorrow on another show.
- You can tell a toddler that Daddy has died and that when someone dies, he is gone forever. The child may then go outside to play and return within the hour and ask, "When is Daddy coming home?" To this child, one hour maybe "forever".
- You can help your child distinguish the difference between television and real life by being consistent with your answers to question about the reality of death.
- Your child needs to hear the same information over and over again until it begins to sink in. "Daddy has died and when you die, you can never come back. He is gone forever".

What is "dead" (transparency #4)

- This is one of the most difficult questions to answer and the one that parents dread the most. How do you explain death?
- Let's turn this statement around and ask the child, "What is life?" Start each statement with "I am alive. I can see" "I am alive. I can breathe", "I am alive I can dance", and so on giving each child an opportunity to repeat the sentence and when they are finished conclude by saying, "Now when all that is gone, that is dead."
- Giving them an opportunity to grasp the significance of the word "death". Explaining to children "life" as we know it helps us to explain to children what "dead" is.

NOTE: To further explain the word "dead" a good illustration will be to use a live fish, dead fish, live plant, dead plant.

COPING WITH THE REALITY OF DEATH

Strategies for telling a child about someone's illness (transparency #5)

- DO NOT hold back important information; let your child know when a loved one is seriously ill and faced with a possible death.
- Not telling a child of someone's serious illness thinking that the illness will pass and you do not want to worry them, IS A MISTAKE
- Children will pick up on all sorts of non-verbal signals---- worried looks, hushed conversation, telephones calls at night, relatives showing up, less contact with you and just general tension.
- Not telling the child will create more anxiety.
- If death occurs, they will have been left unprepared for the event.
- For example, if the father is in the hospital then the child will feel that he is staying away because he does not love her anymore, or that the illness is contagious.
- Simply, children need correct information given to them in language they can understand.

Maintain limits and boundaries

- Children still need to be disciplined, yet it is put aside at times of shock, grief and even stress. "Oh, let her go; her mother is so sick," thus the child has learn to manipulate: My Mom's so sick so I should be able to have anything I want, have favors and get away with anything."
- Still maintain household rules and daily routines as much as possible.

Preparing to visit the seriously ill (transparency #6)

- Visiting a sick relative could be a traumatic experience for a young child.
- Preparing the child for such a traumatic experience requires letting the child know in advance what is happening.
- Use the correct terminology. If the person has cancer, call it cancer, but be prepared for some very direct questions , such as, "What is cancer?" and "Will she die?"
- Talk about your feelings, about being sad, mad, or even scared then talk about feelings the child may have.

- Always ask your child if he would like to visit the ill person. If "no," then find out why, it maybe because he is afraid of strange places----however, NEVER force him to visit if he absolutely does not want to.
- Be prepared to support him later if he begins to feel guilty about not having gone.
- When preparing your child for the visit, it is very important to discuss the setting the ill person is in.
- Discuss the medical equipment in the room? If you are not sure about the different type of equipment in the room, then you may want to consult with the primary nurse or nursing station to answer all inquiries.
- What kind of noises are there? What odors might be smelled? What does the room look like? Is it a hospital room or is it a living room that has been converted into a bedroom?
- Discuss the possible physical changes that your child may see, talk about the way the ill person used to look and how that person looks now
- Taking a gift to an ill person can serve as a diversion for your child.
- If your child has brought some sort of gift it will give him something to do and will provide him a subject to talk about.
- Taking a gift to an ill person also provides a way of saying goodbye.
- Ten to twenty minutes is long enough for a child of any age to endure on a first visit.
- Perhaps the next visit will be less emotional and the child will be comfortable staying longer, be less fidgety and feel less eager to leave.

Preparing for the grieving process

- Preparing your child in advance and giving him/her a chance to visit will help him/her to get on with him/her life more readily when the death occurs.
- Express to the child that grandmother is very sick, but the doctor's are doing everything they can to help her get better - again being completely honest with him/her.
- Explain to him/her that grandmother may die, and by informing him/her of the seriousness of him/her grandmother illness---and by gently bringing up the possibility that Grandmother may die is providing him/her with the opportunity to begin his/her grieving process before the death occurs.
- By visiting the dying grandmother, this will give him/her an opportunity to say goodbye---which is a critical element in the healing process.

PAUSE - Have dads or groups of 3 take 5-10 minutes to reflect on what has been presented. This allows them to share personal stories that have been triggered along the way.

Let's Take About a 10-minute Break

When Death Strikes

"Protecting" your child from reality (transparency #7)

- As a parent, it is tempting that you protect your child from a loved one's death. It is easy for you to say, "This is more than she can handle, so I will hide my real feelings and make up some story about what really happened.
- Or maybe as a parent you will say, "I want her life to go on normally without having to worry or feel bad, so I just won't tell her anything and hope she simply forgets it".
- Do not fool yourself into thinking that you are protecting your child by shutting her off from reality or by telling her things that are untrue; the price for that could be years of needless anguish.

Keep it simple and honest (transparency #8)

- It is VERY important to use the correct terminology that children can understand and be extremely honest with them. Just use simple and honest words.
- Answer only the child's direct questions. Do not give more information than what was asked for
- Children will ask questions as they are ready to deal with the answers.
- If you are honest and direct, your child will know that she can count on you to be available and trustworthy.
- This sense of security is vital during a time when a child is dealing with a loss.

Should children be taken to funerals? (transparency #9)

- After the death of a loved one you may wonder whether you should take your child to the funeral and you may worry about the effect of such a sad event on your child's well-being.
- Why are funerals important? Who are they for? Funerals are for the living. They give us the opportunity to connect with family and friends, to offer love and support to one another.
- Unless there are very special circumstances, children should not be denied the support or the opportunity for mourning that a funeral can provide.
- Seeing a non-moving body in a casket, then witnessing the casket closing and burial help bring closure and reality to the actual death. Sometimes closed casket burials or cremations can be confusing to children.

Talking about the funeral

- It is very important that parents explain to the child exactly what may happen at a funeral.
- Then ask if she wants to attend. Never force him/her.
- If your child has decided not to attend the funeral, spend some time talking with her about the decision she has made and employ a sensitive caregiver to stay with the

child while others attend the funeral. Prepare the caregiver with words you wish used to address questions from the child.

- You may ask him/her if she knows why he/she does not want to go, or what will be the scariest thing for him/her, or what will be the worst thing for him/her.

NOTE: Children who say no are usually afraid of what is going to happen and readily change their minds when you explain the layout of the funeral to them.

- Always prepare him/her for the first visit to a funeral home AND a funeral. Explain to him/her that she will hear a certain type of music, see people react in a certain way and they maybe crying, etc

Funerals and the reality of death

- When a loved one dies, the immediate impact is so powerful, so shattering that we just want to dismiss it.
- Funerals help reconnect us with reality.
- As we look at the dead body of our loved one, or the casket, we have to accept that the death as indeed occurred and let go of the fantasy that this person will return.
- The ceremonies of death, the viewing, the funeral and other rituals make death more real to us.
- This allows us to proceed with the grieving process by breaking through our denial and taking us toward acceptance of reality.

Children need confirmation of death

- If possible, let the child see the dead body of his loved one, this will be extremely helpful to the child to confirm the death. This can happen during private or public visitation or the funeral itself
- Without confirmation of the reality of a loved one's death, your child could spend many months or even years searching and waiting for the return of the deceased.
- Even worse, the child could come to believe that the loved one has simply chosen to go away because he has done something bad or because that person does not love him anymore and that other family members are lying to him about this.

Funerals are for saying goodbye

- As we look at the body or casket, we begin to have our last silent conversation with our loved one.
- This gives them an opportunity to say goodbye.

- We can tell the deceased person all the special things we wish we would have said before like, "I love you," or "I am sorry," or "I will miss you," or anything else that you would like to say to help with the grieving process.
- Ask the child if there is anything special he would like to say or leave with the deceased.
- Having the opportunity to say these words in the presence of the dead body will have far more meaning than they would have when said alone.
- If the casket is open, the child may elect to leave a note or a small photo tucked in the pocket of the deceased.
- Children need to be asked if there is anything they would like to have buried with their loved one. As a parent you may want to suggest something nice, but more often your child will have some very significant idea of his own. (Remind them they will not get it back so favorite blankets or stuffed animals need to be considered carefully!)

When not to take your child to the funeral

- There are a few circumstances under which parents may consider not taking a child to the funeral, other than the child refuses to go.
- One reason might be avoid a frightening scene that could occur.
- If you know that your aunt Sally, being highly emotional, will do something like throw herself into the casket, then the child does not need to be exposed to that.
- With older children, you can talk to them ahead of time about Aunt Sally's emotions and discuss some ways they might help her if she starts losing control.

Reflection

Allow 5-10 minutes for small group reflection again.

Closure

Select a book from the book list in this section to read to the group. Try to end on a "light" note.

Helping Children Cope with Death - Evaluation

Please circle the number that expresses your rating of each statement. The rating code for all statements are as follows:

4 - excellent

3 - very good

2 - fair

1 - poor

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The training increased my knowledge and skills levels. | | | | |
| 2. The training reinforced previous knowledge and skills. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. The training provided new information and ideas. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. The training was supported by usable materials. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. The program was presented in an organized, interesting and competent manner. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. The program had an appropriate amount of audience participation. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. The leader acknowledged and incorporated the experience and feelings of the participants. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. The leader welcomed and answered participants' questions. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. The participants followed through with class activities. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. The length of the class was satisfactory. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

11. What I liked most about this training:

12. What I liked least about this training:

Web Sites

Raindrop - Death Education for Children of All Ages

<http://iul.com/raindrop/raindrp2.htm>

Bereavement Resources

<http://www.valleyhillshf.com/resource.html>

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The idea that all life must end -

that everyone we love, everyone we care about,

and each of us will die some day.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

FICTION FOR THE YOUNG CHILD

The Dead Bird, Margaret Wise Brown, Addison, 1958 (4 - 6 years old)

A group of children find a dead bird and hold a funeral for it.

Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs, Tomie De Paola, Putnam, 1973 (4 - 6)

Memories of a grandmother and a great-grandmother as seen by a small child.

When Violet Died, Mildred Kantrowitz, Parent's Magazine, 1973 (4 - 8)

When Violet, an elderly parakeet dies Amy and Eva hold a funeral for her. Eva, worrying about Amy's statement that nothing lasts forever figures a way to make it last a long time.

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney, Judith Viorst, Atheneum, 1972 (4 - 6) A small child remembers her dead cat by thinking up ten good things about him.

My Grandson Lew, Charlotte Zolotow, Harper, 1974 (4 - 8)

Young Lew was not told of his grandfather's death and years later still misses him, hoping he will show up.

Growing Time, Sandol Warburg, Houghton, 1969 (6 - 9) A child learns about life in coping with the death of a dog.

About Dying, Sara Stein, Walker and Company, 720 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York, 10019 This book was written to be a shared experience for child and adult. The child's part of the book is a simple story about the death of a bird and a child's grandfather. The adult text serves as a resource to help guide the handling of the child's spontaneous questions.

The Saddest Time, Norma Simon, Albert Whitman & Company, 1986. This book can help to stimulate dialogue between adults and children on the essential subject of life and death.

Overhead #1 through #9 are illustrations.

[Overhead #1](#)

[Overhead #2](#)

[Overhead #3](#)

[Overhead #4](#)

[Overhead #5](#)

[Overhead #6](#)

[Overhead #7](#)

[Overhead #8](#)

[Overhead #9](#)

Handout, [Death Attitude Scale](#)

Handout, [Death and Dying, How to Help Child Understand Death](#)

Handout, [Death and Dying, No Need To Tell All About Death](#)

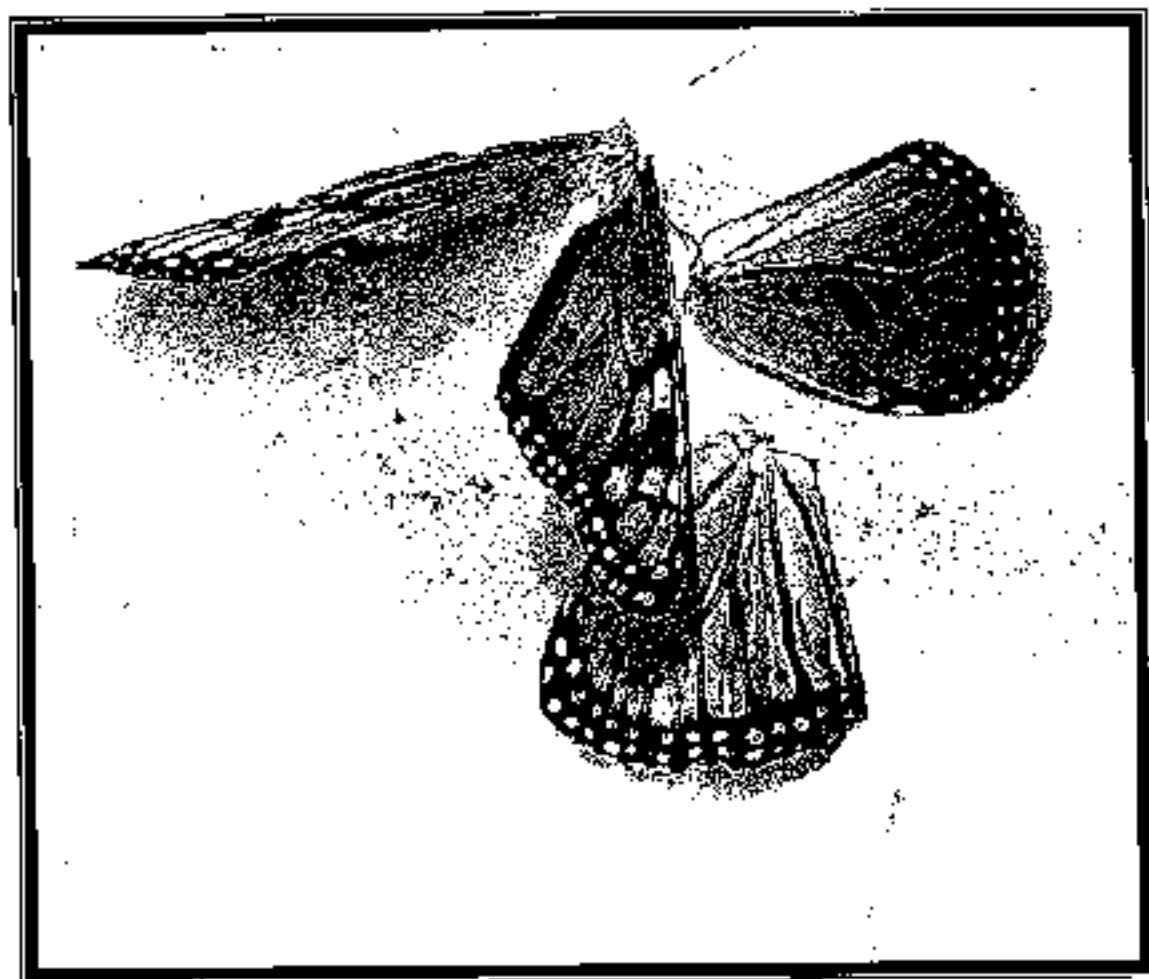
Handout, [Lifestyle, Grief Can Be As Different As Individual](#)

Handout, [Psychologist Tells, How People Cope With Loneliness](#)





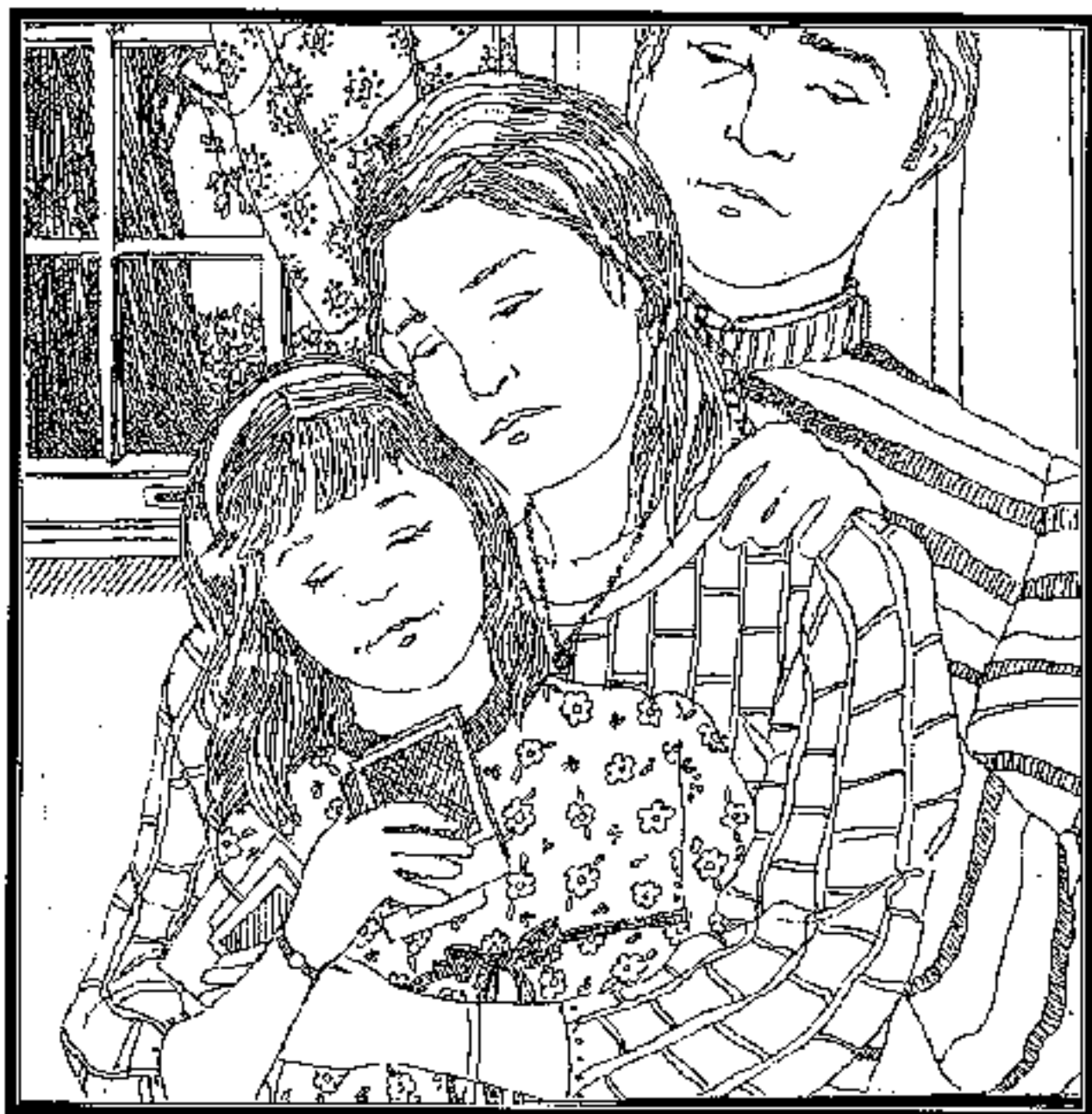




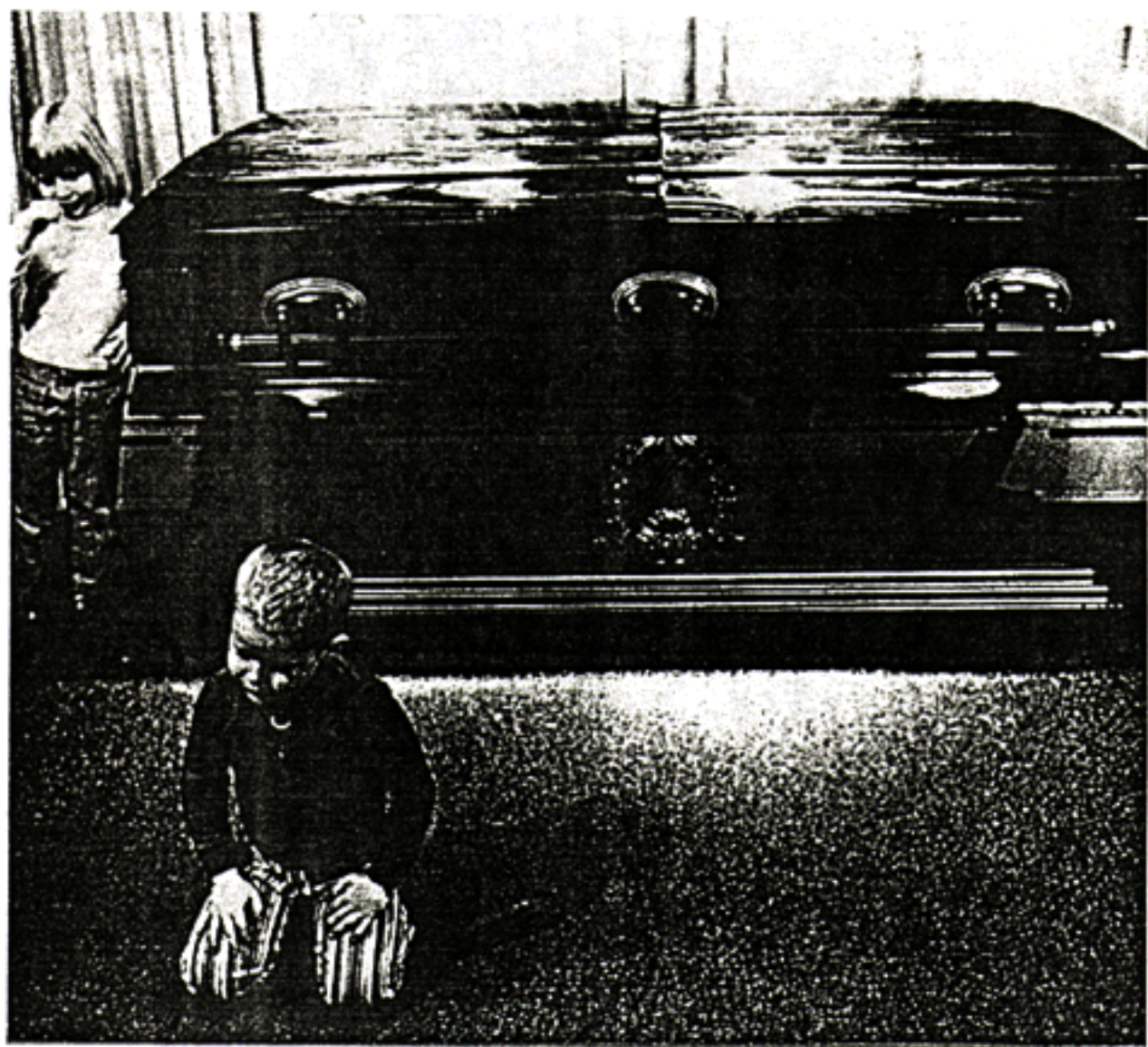




“Be quiet. Grandpa is sick.”







DEATH ATTITUDE SCALE

The following items are not intended to test your knowledge. There are no right or wrong answers. *Directions:* Read each item carefully. Place a check mark next to each item with which you AGREE. Make *No Marks* next to items with which you disagree.

- 249 The thought of death is a glorious thought
- 247 When I think of death I am most satisfied
- 245 Thoughts of death are wonderful thoughts
- 243 The thought of death is very pleasant
- 241 The thought of death is comforting
- 239 I find it fairly easy to think of death
- 237 The thought of death isn't so bad
- 235 I do not mind thinking of death
- 233 I can accept the thought of death
- 231 To think of death is common
- 229 I don't fear thoughts of death, but I don't like them either
- 227 Thinking about death is overvalued by many
- 225 Thinking of death is not fundamental to me
- 223 I find it difficult to think of death
- 221 I regret the thought of death
- 219 The thought of death is an awful thought
- 217 The thought of death is dreadful
- 215 The thought of death is traumatic
- 213 I hate the sound of the word death
- 211 The thought of death is outrageous

How To Help Child Understand Death

By Dr. Josephine Hoffer
Special to the NewsPress

How do I help my child to understand death, even before he may encounter the loss of a loved one?

This question is of vital importance to all who may work or live with children. This is a realistic question because it helps us to recognize that death is a part of life. The nature of the universe helps us to see this fundamental principle in action. Birth, life, death, and whatever you may or may not believe about death is verified in the naturalness of the universe.

Now, how do we help children observe and experience the life process? I hope your child has an opportunity to see plants and animals growing and, yes, even dying. Children learn much about life as they plant seeds, see them grow, produce, die and then gather seed for another planting to perpetuate the continuing events of life.

Caring for a pet is a good way to help a child understand the life cycle. If it is not possible to own a pet, you can find stories that help your child to understand birth, life, and sometimes death itself. Should a child's pet die, do not shield him from reality by not letting him see the dead pet. Give him time to grieve for the loss before you replace it with another pet. Children can handle reality better

when they are permitted to know what is happening and to participate in the ongoing events related to a loss.

An experience I had years ago with my nearly-three-year-old granddaughter who was spending the summer with us illustrates a point. Her grandfather and I decided goldfish would be the best living animal for her to have, since there were two pet dogs at her home. She fed the goldfish and helped change the water. One morning one was missing. Her grandfather had disposed of it, feeling he was being helpful. When my granddaughter saw one was missing she said "Granny, one is gone." I explained that most likely her grandfather had removed it. I asked him not to remove a fish if another one died. In a few days another one did die. She said, "Granny, the fish isn't swimming." I told her it was dead and that she should take it from the bowl. When she took it out, she said, "It is stiff." This was the time to tell her that dead meant this fish could not swim, eat, rest, breathe. We put it in a box and buried it in the flower bed. I explained that when people die we have a funeral. That is one way of saying goodbye to a person. There are flowers and music, and then we take the person to the cemetery and bury them because we love them. (If cremation is the end rite, then certainly we would

help the child understand cremation as a means of taking care of the body.)

My granddaughter was sensitive, as if thinking, but made no comments, nor did she ask any questions. About two weeks later I was lifting her from her bath to the dressing table when she patted me on the cheek and said, "Granny, when you die, Grampy and I are going to take you out to the cemetery and bury you, because we love you so much."

What did this child learn? I feel she learned that people as well as plants and animals die. She learned this in a loving, supportive environment. She was not questioned about what she had learned. Sometimes children do not question what we tell them.

Look around you at death contrasted against life: a dead tree among live ones as we may be driving, a dead flower on a bush. We really don't have to go far to see life and death in contrast. Try to make it a natural experience. Sometimes when we see a child pick up a dead bug or a dead bird we say, in disgust, "Put it down, it's dead." Yes, it is dead, but use this opportunity to help the child learn about life and death as a part of the life cycle.

Do send questions you would like to have us discuss to P.O. Box 487, Stillwater, 74076.

Death And Dying

No Need To Tell All About Death

By Dr. Josephine Hoffer

A parent asks: "When I'm not sure what to tell my 5- and 7-year-old sons about the meaning of death, what do I say to them?"

It is helpful if a parent has, from the beginning of life, helped the child to understand life by explaining what is happening to the child. Attention can be called to growth that is alive and that which is dead. Let's help children to face life and death. There are many stories about life and death that help parents.

A point to keep in mind is the maturity of the child and what he/she may be able to assimilate without frustration. Always tell the truth at least as far as you understand it. Try to use daily happenings to give validity to what you are saying. Listen for questions that may give you entree to the child's thinking and feelings. Often a child has his thinking stimulated away from home and then out of the "clear blue sky" he asks questions at home. Have time to listen and don't feel you must

tell a child all you think he needs to know at one time. Often out of the experiences that a child may have, he/she assumes what happened to him is the pattern that applies to everyone he knows.

The child that has lost by death a sibling may tell a friend at play "your sister is going to die." The child is only coping with life as he/she knows it. Certainly the child is not trying to hurt someone. He/she is not "bad" because they have said this to a friend. The child could be helped by a parent or teacher to know that only a doctor can give such information and we as friends should not tell another person that their brother or sister is going to die. When children manifest such behavior, it means teachers and parents have a cue to help a child understand life and to know they are not "bad" because their assumption was in error.

Do send your questions to Dr. Josephine Hoffer, P.O. Box 487, Stillwater, 74076, or in care of the NewsPress, P.O. Box 2288, Stillwater, 74076.

So Can Be How You Overcome It

Grief Can Be As Different As Individual

By Gina Lauer
NewsPress Staff Writer

Grief can be waking up in the middle of the night to touch someone who is not there. It can be standing quietly at the grave of a child. It can be a special song, a special place.

So says Alan D. Wolfelt, director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colo., who presented a program on "The Experience of Grief" during a national video teleconference Tuesday at Oklahoma State University. About 50 people attended the teleconference in the Student Union Theatre.

"We're all going to grieve in our own unique way," said Wolfelt, who defines grief as an inner response to loss.

Mourning, he said, "is taking that grief that's within us and sharing it outside ourselves."

It is through this sharing that people in mourning can move toward reconciliation, that is, learning to live without someone who has died.

Wolfelt said some people try to offer support to mourners by telling them to "keep busy" or "keep your head up." But, he said, talking or thinking about the person who has died is not unhealthy.

"You are never over the experience of grief."

— Alan Wolfelt
Director
Center For Loss And Transition

person will always be there," he said.

He encouraged those who work with mourners to "allow that person to teach you about their personal experience."

Caregivers need to consider a person's relationship with the deceased, the nature of the death and the support system of family and friends, Wolfelt said.

Throughout the program, Wolfelt called upon people in his audience for examples. One woman had lost her two sons to muscular dystrophy, another woman's oldest son had died in a farm accident.

One woman said she found that she couldn't do her bank statement after her husband died.

Wolfelt said grieving people often exhibit a wide range of characteristics as they move through the reconciliation process. The person may say: "No, this isn't happening."

There may be shock, denial and numbness. Later, there may be explosive emotions, feelings of loneliness, anger or relief.

discouraged," Wolfelt said.

He said caregivers can offer support by allowing grieving people to tell their stories "not just once, but over and over and over."

Wolfelt said funerals can help in the reconciliation process, too. Viewing the body should be an option, and should sometimes be encouraged, he said. Looking at the deceased may help a person acknowledge the loss, and can help give a person a picture for memory.

He said he encourages eulogies — talking about what a person did during his life — as a means of expression.

History speaks for the importance of services for the deceased, he said.

"There must be something... inherently healing or we wouldn't have been doing it all this time."

Wolfelt said not everyone needs professional help when grieving, but people do need to share their feelings with someone.

"We do need our fellow

Wolfelt's advice was not only for mourners, but for the people with a "helping role." He said it is important for caregivers to learn the art of "being with" mourners.

"It's a time to keep our mouths closed and our ears opened..." he said.

Wolfelt emphasized: "You are never over the experience of grief."

Wolfelt also provided a list of warning signs for caregiver "burnout." Some symptoms are exhaustion, irritability, cynicism, depression, confusion and the feeling of being indispensable.

Caregivers need to take care of themselves, he said. They have to be aware of personal limitations, maintain a support system, nurture their own intimate relationships and plan daily rest and relaxation periods. In addition, caregivers have to remember to keep a sense of humor, laugh and play.

Sponsors of the teleconference were Strode Funeral Home, OSU's department of family relations and child development and department of sociology, the United Ministries at OSU, the Methodist Student Center, home economics cooperative extension, home economics university extension, and graduate student council.

Psychologist Tells

How People Cope With Loneliness

SAN DIEGO, Calif. (AP) — If you're feeling loneliness, you're not alone. Loneliness is more common today than the common cold, according to Dr. Ann Clark, a psychologist who teaches at the United States International University here.

"A recent survey found that more than half of those questioned had experienced severe loneliness within the past week," Clark says.

In studying the subject, Clark says she has found a variety of different types of loneliness, and she has also come up with some antidotes for individuals who feel lonely. She offers these examples of how different individuals experience different types of loneliness:

■ "There's no point to it all." Loneliness is often disguised as feelings that the routines of life are leading you nowhere. For some individuals it's a lack of central focus and direction in their lives.

■ "Whenever I'm alone, I feel lonely." People who haven't accepted themselves as whole, healthy and wonderful human beings can feel that when they are alone they are not in good company. Some people also remember childhood incidents, when being alone resulted in some negative experience. They feel that something bad is going to happen because they are alone.

■ "In the middle of a party, I

cial social contacts sometimes lead us to remember lost close relationships with family or friends.

■ "Spending time alone means you aren't popular." One young man whose mother had stressed the importance of popularity felt uncomfortable whenever he found himself alone.

Regardless of the type of loneliness a person experiences, learning to be alone without feeling lonely is the first step in overcoming loneliness, Clark suggests.

She has written a booklet echoing that advice in its title, "Alone, but Not Lonely." The booklet is aimed at individuals recovering from addictions.

"People who are addicted to drugs or alcohol may have been avoiding themselves for many, many years. When the substance they used to avoid facing their true feelings is removed from their lives, they experience a particularly painful type of loneliness," Clark says.

She recommends those experiencing severe loneliness seek professional help. She also offers these suggestions as steps anyone can take to help overcome some of the loneliness they feel.

■ Balance your life. Try to devote one third of your waking time to work, one third to intimate relationships and one third to social relationships. For a single person, that can mean saving time in your life for dating and spending time with ex-

tended family members.

■ Practice being alone. Set aside some time each day to be alone in a positive way. Write in a journal, daydream, meditate or take a walk with just yourself and your own thoughts for company.

■ Become involved in

worthwhile organizations.

■ Try something new. Take a dance class, try roller skating, go on a group tour. The idea is to learn to recognize the possibilities around you, and to make new close friends who you can share your life with.