

Perfect Choice Funeral Plans

How to Explain the Loss of a Loved One to a Child

Explaining the death of a loved one to a child can be a difficult if you are not sure how the child will react. It can be especially heart-breaking if the child becomes visibly upset. Their understanding of the death and loss will vary depending on their age and developmental stage. All children will react differently and what works well for one may not be appropriate for another so the following is a guide only. Adjust how you broach the subject based on how you think they will feel and react.

0 – 2 year olds

Children at this age will not understand what has happened and where the deceased person has gone. They will experience the feeling of loss and may express this through loud protests. They may try searching for the deceased. It can be hard to cope with this behaviour. Keeping the child in a routine and giving them lots of love and attention will help.

It's important that you try to make it clear to little ones that the person will not be returning. This is because they will continue to ask for them and search for them. Make sure to keep special mementos and photographs for the child, as when they get older they may begin to ask more questions about the deceased.

2 – 5 year olds

Children between these ages think in very literal terms about everything. If you say that someone is gone, or lost, they will most likely continue to look for them or ask about them. Using popular statements such as 'gone for a long sleep' or 'we've lost them' can cause further confusion for the child. You should try and explain that people who die don't come back, as children of this age cannot understand the finality and irreversibility of death.

It is also a good idea to explain that there are many causes of death. Children are just beginning to understand that their actions and words can have an impact and they should be reassured that it is not their fault. Answer questions honestly, simply and openly and maintain a consistent routine for the child.

5 – 8 year olds

In this age range children can often understand that death is irreversible and that it happens to everyone. They may ask lots of questions about death and could become preoccupied with thoughts of death.



They may feel burdened with responsibility and feel like they have to take on adult tasks to support surviving members of the family. This can lead to increased stress levels; allow them to be a child and make sure you're available and open to answer any questions they may have.

It is important to make the child's school aware of the situation so they can offer support. They can often feel different to other children which can sometimes lead to bullying. Watch out for other behaviours such as tantrums, sleep disturbance, nightmares and acting younger than their age so that you can comfort them and look for solutions.

8 – 12 year olds

Children at this age are aware that death is irreversible and universal and they can often become hard to communicate with. They may develop challenging behaviour or express their grief through physical aches and pains. Allow them the chance to talk to an adult they trust and reassure them about any changes that may happen to their lifestyle. Again, make sure there is support available for them at school.

Teenagers

Teenagers can find it hard to deal with grief and loss because they often internalise their feelings. They may want to solve problems themselves at this age and find it difficult to seek help, support or advice from adults. They understand death but are not emotionally mature enough to deal with the feelings associated with it. They need the opportunity to talk to trusted adults or peers about the situation and their feelings.

School can become overwhelming especially if it is an important time in their education. Have the school made aware of the situation and have the support in place should they need it.

Most importantly treat them as adults. Be honest and open with them. Do not burden teenagers with words such as 'be strong for your family' or suggest that they must take care of their family. Consider letting them be involved with funeral arrangements if they wish to be, and allow them to have a say on any subsequent life changes that may come following the death.

Contact name: Louise Clarke
Role: Community and Pre-Need Manager
Contact number: 01582 499608

About Perfect Choice Funeral Plans

Perfect Choice Funeral Plans are provided by NAFD Services Limited which was set-up by the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) whose member firms carry out over 80% of all



funerals in the UK. NAFD Services Limited is a founding member of the Funeral Planning Authority, the official body that oversees the operation of companies offering funeral plans.

Perfect Choice Funeral Plan funds are held securely in a guaranteed whole of life assurance policy. For maximum security NAFD Services only works with UK-based life assurance companies that are authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) and regulated by the PRA and Financial Conduct Authority. A key difference with Perfect Choice Funeral Plans is that the pre-payment monies cannot be used for anything other than the client's funeral for total peace of mind.

