

Khululeka

grief support for children and youth

Talking with Children about Death and Loss

- ❖ Use direct, honest language appropriate for the child's age.
- ❖ Be willing to explore ideas and questions about death. It's not the answers that are important, but the loving atmosphere in which they're given.
- ❖ Give children the opportunity to see and help the dying person even if it's hard or sad.
- ❖ Even young children can do something. One small child decided to assist her father, who was dying of cancer, by putting the toothpaste on his toothbrush.
- ❖ Ask the child's preferences for when death occurs. Does she want to be wakened in the middle of the night or called out of school?
- ❖ Help children identify emotions such as sadness or anger or guilt, emotions that might feel like a stomach ache or headache.
- ❖ Share stories about the person.
- ❖ Provide hands-on activities. Movement and play are therapeutic. Have them draw and make memory books or boxes.
- ❖ Through it all, assure children they are not alone in their grief. Other children have grieved a death and survived. One day, they will be stronger than it's possible to imagine now, strong enough to help another child.
- ❖ Explain to the children what rituals will take place and what they mean. Even if the child is not allowed to participate.

*Advice from the experts
from the Center for Grief and Loss for Children*

Talking to children about death is a lot easier than you think. Most children do not fear death in the way adults do and have a freer relationship with death than we do. You will be surprised how much you can learn from your children. The most important thing is not that you tell them what you think but that you find out what they think. The important thing that you need to communicate is that you are willing to talk about it.

More information on www.Khululeka.org

