



How to Talk About **DEATH** of **A PET** with Your Child

For many of us, our pets are part of our families. Often, a pet's death is the first experience a child has with loss and grief. How we talk with them about the death of a pet may help them grieve when they experience other losses.

Here are some tips for explaining pet loss to children:

Choose the right time and setting:

Choose a time when the child is not preoccupied, tired, or stressed.

Find a quiet place, without distractions, to talk with your child.

Be honest and simple:

Explain death as the end of the pet's life and let them know it is a natural part of life.

Use age-appropriate language and do not use phrases like "ran away" or "went to sleep."

Encourage and support the expression of feelings:

Express your own feelings about the loss and model that it is normal to grieve and share emotions.

Let your child know it is okay to experience a lot of emotions and encourage them to ask questions.

Reassure:

Emphasize that the pet was loved and had a good life.

Reassure them that the pet's death was no one's fault, and they did not cause it.

Offer consistent support and watch for "red flags":

Be prepared for ongoing conversations and provide continued support as a child processes their grief and check in on their feelings periodically.

Watch for changes in appetite, sleep, and behavior.

Seek additional support from a counselor or therapist if needed.

Don't hesitate to reach out to a professional if your child exhibits persistent regressive behaviors, nightmares, refusal to go to school or activities. You know your child best. If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to JCS at **410-466-9200**.

For more information on grief support, contact

Donna Kane
Grief Clinician

Jewish COMMUNITY SERVICES

at dkane@jcsbaltimore.org or 410-843-7394.

To learn more about grief support and resources or to access video programs for children, visit jcsbalt.org/grief.

