



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

How you tell a child that their brother or sister has died may significantly impact them for years to come.

Here are some tips for explaining sibling loss to children:

Choose the right time and setting. Pick a time when your child is not tired, preoccupied, or stressed, and you can give them your full attention. Find a quiet place without distractions.

Avoid euphemisms and vague terms. Avoid statements like, 'went to sleep and didn't wake up' or 'was sick and went to be with the angels,' which may cause fear of going to sleep or getting sick. Reassure them the death was no one's fault.

Encourage expression of feelings. It's okay to show sadness and cry in front of your children. Let them know you are upset but will be okay. Encourage them to share their feelings and concerns. Young children who may lack the words to express emotions can draw pictures that show their feelings.

Keep memories alive. Memories are important connectors and mark holidays and occasions such as birthdays. Making a memory box, having a blanket printed with family pictures, keeping something as simple as framed pictures around the house, and sharing stories can help to keep memories alive. In this way, their siblings will always remain a part of the family.

Take care of yourself. Accept the comfort and support you need to process your own pain and grief. This is important for your personal healing and helps you have the strength to support your surviving children.

Check in and watch for "red flags." There is no timeline for grief. Keep checking in with your children about how they are feeling. If they are clingier or more upset than usual, they might be sensing adult emotions or feeling overwhelmed by their own. Watch for changes in appetite, sleep, and behavior. Older kids may seem withdrawn or angry. No matter their age, offer extra attention and reassure them of your love.

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.

