



Clayfield College

### **How to talk to children about death -**

Firstly, we understand that you know your child best. Different ages conceptualise and respond to death in their own ways, so it is important to follow your instincts as a parent/carer in navigating this.

### **Explaining death -**

If this is the first experience of death for your young child, it can be helpful to explain the concept in honest and clear language.

For example:

“Everything living has a lifetime. That means they are born, they grow up, and eventually their body stops working and they die. This happens to plants, animals, and people.”

“When a person or animal dies, their body stops working, and they can no longer see, hear, breathe, or feel anything.”

“Death happens when the body gets very old, sick, injured, or worn out, and it stops working. When the body dies, it is irreversible, and that body will never work again.”

### **Processing death -**

Avoid using euphemisms like “gone to sleep”, or “in a better place” as children may find this confusing. Please state the facts “...Mr Peckham has died... and he won't be your teacher anymore.” Allow your child to ask questions and process the information that they have received.

It is important to remind children that although there is an inevitability of death, reassure them that you will likely be around for many years to come. Furthermore, it's important to remind children that not everyone who gets sick or injured will die.

“I'm not going to die right now, but someday my body will stop working, and I will die. Everything living will die someday, including me. But I am healthy, and I will probably live for a long, long time. Usually, people die when they are old and have lived for a long time, like (my grandparent or great grandparent.)”

“Remember when you got sick with the flu and felt bad for a few days, but you got better”.

Be consistent in your own labelling and modelling of your own emotions. Labelling some of your own feelings will make it easier for your child to share theirs. If your child sees you cry, explain what you are feeling and why. It is important that children can see that it is acceptable to cry and grieve.

Reassure your child that you are there to talk to them about how they are feeling. They may want to share memories about their teacher who has died or commemorate his life in a way that is meaningful to them.

### **Resources for parent/s and carers –**

GriefLine 1300 845 745

Parent Line 1300 30 1300

Kids helpline has excellent resources on how to support your child. [Supporting a child through grief and loss | Kids Helpline](#)

Let your light *shine*