



Frequently asked questions

How do I explain death to children?

- Keep the explanation simple and clear.
- Be prepared for the child to ask the same questions more than once.
- Use the word death or dead instead of sleeping or gone.
- Use words that are age-appropriate, words a child will understand based on his or her age.
- Use comparisons a child will understand. For example, things to describe the body versus soul concept.
- Sit at or below their eye level.
- Tell them how you are doing and feeling instead of just asking how they are doing. This may open the door to talk to you. Even if they choose not to talk, realize you may have returned their feelings to normal.
- Encourage them to ask questions.
- The best way to take care of your child is to take care of yourself. Often parents neglect themselves making sure their child is OK first.

What are the chances of another infant death?

The chances of having another infant die due to SIDS is slightly higher than those families who have not had a previous child die of that diagnosis. The chance of having another infant die of a congenital abnormality depends on the type of abnormality and needs to be discussed with your physician.

Can I love a new baby as I loved the first one?

This is a common question. The answer is yes, love is an extraordinary thing. You love the individual qualities of each child, which will be different with each child.

How long will grief take?

Unfortunately there is no specific time that grief will take. You will notice an improvement in periods of crying and anger over time. A person never will "get over it," but rather will learn better ways to cope. There will be good days and bad days. But if you do not feel as though things are getting better, it is a good idea to seek out professional help.

You will notice the distance between "the really hard days" starts to grow longer. Remember the intensity can stay the same, giving you the feeling that you are starting over again. This is part of the process and is normal. Parents revisit their grief at different times in their life. They may feel the grief when their child "should" have been in line for the school bus or "should" have graduated from high school. Families also tell us that you never forget, but things do get better.

Why?

Everyone struggles with the question "Why?" This question also may cause feelings of guilt. You may feel that if you can find the answer, you can change what has happened. This question seems to demand an answer, so that you can make sure it won't happen again.

Why me?

Another question everyone deals with is, "Why me?" Sometimes, people view the death as a punishment for something they did in the past. Some people may feel anger over this question. Watching the news and hearing some of the horrible stories can make you compare yourself to the news situation and feel as though you were cheated. Getting together with other "nice" people this has happened to, can calm some of these feelings - finding that it does indeed happen to nice people.

What can I do for special days/holidays to remember my child?

Most find the special day goes easier (and with less anxiety) if their child is included in the special day. Visit our grief and bereavement resources page (for families) for a list of ideas.

How can I remember a family member's child or a friend's child during significant holidays?

The most important thing to do is to acknowledge their child. As time goes on, families relate that fewer people acknowledge their child. Send a card, give them a call or visit. Anything that shows you remember. Visit our grief and bereavement resources page (for families) for a list of ideas.