



Death in the family

Death in the family affects everyone. Children in particular need to be considered and supported in addition to it being a difficult time for the whole family. How they react depends on a number of things, for example:

- **How close** the person who dies was to the child, and the family, is important. How involved the person was in their lives is also a factor.
- **If the death was expected** or if the person has been ill.
- **The child's age and level of understanding** and how the death affects their life. Infants may feel the loss mainly because it affects the way in which they are looked after and their daily routine. They are very sensitive to unhappy feelings of those around them, and may become anxious, difficult to settle and more needy of attention. Children from about the age of 5 are about to understand the basic facts about death:
 - It happens to all living things.
 - It has a cause.
 - It involves permanent separation.

First Contact

and

Support Hub

01429 284284

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<http://hartlepool.fsd.org.uk>

To find your nearest children's
centre call: **01429 284284**





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Helping a child to cope with death

Being aware of how children normally respond to death makes it easier for an adult to help. It also makes it easier to identify that a child is finding it particularly hard to cope with.

Early Stages

Experience shows that children benefit from knowing the truth at an early stage. The closer the relationship, the more important this is. Adults can also help children to cope by listening to the child's experience of the death, answering their questions and reassuring them. Young children often find it difficult to recall memories of a dead person without first being reminded of them. They can be very upset by not having these memories. A photograph can be a great source of comfort.

Later on

Once children accept the death, they are likely to display their feelings of sadness, anger and anxiety on and off, over a long period of time, and often at unexpected moments. Sometimes a child may 'forget' that the family member has died, or persist in the belief that they are still alive. This is normal in the first few weeks following death, but may cause problems if it continues.

If your concerns continue seek help from your GP.

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