GLOBAL GRIEF NETWORK | LEARNER TOOLS

Conversation Guide: Talking With Children

Conversation Guide | Planning one conversation at a time



About this page: Use this to prepare for a specific conversation with a child, such as telling them about a death, answering a hard question, or checking in later. You do not need perfect words. Honest, simple, and kind is enough.

Three things to keep in mind

- **Use real words.** Say "died" rather than phrases that could confuse a child.
- **Keep it short.** Share a little, then pause and let their questions lead.
- **Come back to it.** Children often return to the same questions over days, months, and years.

Openings you might adapt

"I have some very sad news. Grandpa died this morning. His heart stopped working, and he cannot come back."

"You can ask me anything, any time. If I do not know the answer, I will tell you that."

"I am crying because I miss him. It is okay to feel sad, and it is okay to feel other things too."

"Nothing you did, said, or thought made this happen."

Plan your conversation

Child's name and age

When and where we will talk

Another adult who could be with us

What helps this child feel calm

What I want to tell them, in simple words

A question they might ask	How I could answer, honestly and simply

A question they might ask	How I could answer, honestly and simply

After the conversation

What they asked, said, or did, and anything to follow up on

Adults I will let know (teacher, coach, caregiver)

When I will check in with them again

When to look for more help

If you are worried about a child's safety, sleep, eating, school, or behavior over time, contact their doctor or a licensed child mental health professional. If a child is in danger, call 911.

In immediate danger: call 911. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text **988** (US). Elsewhere, use your local emergency number and crisis line.

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