

HUUF Family Ministry
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Talking to our children about death

Adults are generally far more uncomfortable about discussing death and dying than children. Children begin to develop great curiosity about death as soon as they begin to experience make-believe deaths in fairy tales, games and television shows. Children pretend to be dead in games, they kill "bad guys" in video games and often discuss death freely with other children. Children usually talk as easily about death and dying as they discuss sports, favorite toys or foods they like. When someone they love dies, they are saddened by the death but may still have a lot of curiosity about the dead person and talk openly about their feelings. However, when children sense that an adult is uneasy discussing death, they may become uneasy about the discussion themselves.

We began our meeting by contemplating this quote, and thinking about what makes *us* uncomfortable. We then drew on what was shared to make a list of things that we thought worked and didn't work in talking with kids about death.

What works

Honesty

Speaking our own truth with conviction

Letting them know people live on in our hearts

Remembering that each person will have different concerns & questions

Letting others have unanswerable questions

Pain and grief are *real*; it is a part of life

Allowing *whatever* feelings come up, whether tough or happy

What doesn't work

Avoiding the issue

Trying to hide our own feelings

Forcing our own answers on to others

Internet Resources

<http://www.uua.org/clf/connections/Parenting/death.html>

http://www.uua.org/re/reach/fall01/parenting/resources_from_the_dougy_center.html

<http://www.hospicenet.org/html/talking.html>

http://www.buddhanet.net/r_talkcn.htm

http://www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk/resources/discussing_death.html