



CHANDLER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

WHAT A PARENT, CARETAKER OR OTHER CARING ADULT CAN DO TO HELP EXPLAIN DEATH TO A CHILD

Tell the child about the death as soon as possible. Be direct, simple, honest, and gentle.

Explain, truthfully what happened. Do not make up stories that will have to change later. Even the knowledge that a person died as a result of a violent act is usually best shared with the child.

Encourage the child to express feelings. Accept the emotions and reaction the child expresses. Do not tell the child how to feel.

Share your feelings with the child. Allow the child to comfort you. Do not be afraid to cry in the child's presence. Cry together, hold each other.

Offer warmth and your physical presence and affection.

Be patient. Know that children need to hear "the story" and to ask the same questions again and again.

Use basic words like "die" and "dead" to convey the message. Avoid the phrase that "softens the blow"; phrases such as: sleeping, went on vacation, God took them, etc. will only confuse and scare a child. Use the deceased person's name when referring to him or her.

Be sensitive to the age of your child and his or her level of understanding – don't offer information beyond the child's comprehension, as it will only confuse matter.

Read children's books related to death with your child. Play with the child in ways that will allow the child to express his/her feelings.

Read books yourself on helping a child through grief.

Listen to what the child is telling or asking you, then respond according to the child's needs.

In binder – CRT members resource to be used as needed – sent home to parents as an attachment to the parent communication letter