

You Are Not Alone

There are various places locally that can provide you and your child with support as you learn to cope:

ARCH Hospice

Manager of Hospice Services
E: 705.942.1556 ext. 208

Algoma Family Services

205 McNabb St.
Sault Ste. Marie, ON
P: (705) 945-5050
E: afs@algomafamilyservices.org

Canadian Mental Health Association

386 Queen St E.
Sault Ste. Marie, ON
P: (705) 759-0458
E: information@cmhassm.com

Employee Assistance Program

Speak with your employer to determine if you are eligible to receive assistance.

There is an abundance of resources available to help you and your child cope with death and dying.

If you are overwhelmed or just don't know where to start, please reach out to us.

You are not alone. Let us help you talk with your child about death and dying.



About ARCH Hospice

ARCH Hospice provides quality, compassionate care through end-of-life to Algoma District families at no cost. The emotional, spiritual, and physical comfort of our residents and their loved ones is our highest priority. We offer a home-away-from-home during one of life's most important moments: the end-of-life journey. ARCH Hospice is only partially government funded, requiring a minimum of \$750,000 annually in community support, as well as the generosity of over 140 volunteers to provide our services to the community.

ARCH
hospice



Comfortable end-of-life journeys

229 Fourth Line West
Sault Ste. Marie ON P6A 0B5
info@archhospice.ca | 705.942.1556
www.archhospice.ca

Talking With Your Child

About Death & Dying



Why Children Need to Talk About Dying

As much as we may try to, we can't shield children from the reality of death and dying. They will inevitably encounter death at least once in their lifetime, whether it is a mouse brought in by the cat or the death of a grandparent.

If we leave children alone with their fears and misconceptions about death, they may begin to fear death and not learn how to effectively cope with it. The sooner we are able to talk to children about death and dying, the better.

Remember:

- You don't have to be an expert to help a grieving child cope. You cannot stop children from feeling sad but you can support them by listening and talking.
- Be honest. Children will know if you try to hide the truth from them. We do not have all the answers. It is okay to say to your child "I'm not sure about that" or "I don't know the answer to that".
- A grieving child needs to know that grief and the feelings it evokes are normal responses to loss. It will take time to get through grief but there will come a time when it won't hurt so much.
- Let your child see you grieve. By being open with your sorrow and tears you are showing your child that it is okay to feel sad and to cry.

- Children develop at different rates and have their own personal ways of handling and expressing emotions. No matter how children cope with death or express their feelings, they need sensitive and nonjudgmental responses from adults.

- Listen carefully and be attentive to uncharacteristic behavior.

- Involve children in family activities including attending funerals if they want to. It is an opportunity for them to say goodbye.

Understanding Death At Different Ages

Children understand words very literally. It is important to explain death in simple terms for young children. For example, when someone dies, explain that they don't breathe, or eat, or feel hungry or cold and you won't be able to see them again. Use concrete language, like "die," not euphemisms like "sleep."

Teens will likely feel a wide range of emotions surrounding the death, including sadness, anger, guilt, and helplessness. Some teens may withdraw while other teens may engage in risky activities. Recognize that these actions are your teen's attempt to regain control and cope with their emotions. It is common for teenagers to seek the support of their friends more than their parents.

When a Child's Sibling Dies

The death of a brother or sister has a tremendous impact on siblings of any age. Some parents feel that it is best for their other children to be shielded from exposure to the death of a sibling. Research actually shows that children make a much healthier adjustment to the loss of a sibling if they are informed and allowed to participate, to the extent they wish, in the events following the death.

It is important for parents to be open with their child about their sibling's death. Grieve openly as it tells your child that it is normal to express feelings of sadness.

Some children willingly talk about their sibling's death and their own feelings while others choose not to talk. Let your child guide you through their own grieving process. Follow their pace – don't force your child to talk about it if they aren't ready. Let your child know you are available whenever they have a question or want to talk.

A common occurrence after sibling loss is guilt. It is important to let your child know that arguments, envy and "I hate you" declarations are normal parts of sibling interaction.

