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Explain Death to Very Young Children

OUTPOST



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We must explain death to very young children. Explain the significance and importance before they go to nursery school. While they still have a chance to understand. While they are still close to death. While the scent still lingers on their bodies and the dew is not dried.

Children of all faiths and ages will benefit by the solace given in their faith traditions.

A great-niece of mine said a wonderful thing to me about the prospect of death. She said: "Uncle John, when I die, I will be dead, but I will be mostly alive." What a wise way to look at death!

How young do you take a child to a funeral?

Many people are against taking a child to a funeral under any circumstance. Children younger than five may not understand the proceedings and it may seem like any other service to them. The service itself may not affect them at all if they are not astute enough to pick up on the ambience and over-all mood. Once children are able to understand why the service is being held, you must be in touch with how they feel about death.

And take them to as many funerals as possible

Children make random comments regarding topics that they are mulling over in their minds, or frighten them in some way. It could be that if your child has not mentioned death, he simply hasn't thought about it. If that is the case, is that a topic you feel ready to address with your child? Of course you should try to show children a corpse of, at least, an animal, as early as possible in their lives.

Your readiness to discuss the topic or use it as a teaching tool, your child's sensitivity and curiosity must be your guide here. To go to a funeral, it isn't necessary your child understands *everything* associated with death. Approach death as you would any other topic and give the age-appropriate information required at the time. At a later date, you can add to the information as your child's age and understanding grow.



The famous story is told of a young boy who innocently asks his mother: Where do I come from? The mother takes a deep breath and then gives a long winded, detailed explanation of the birds and the bees. When she finishes, the boy looks up and innocently responds: No, where do I come from? Boston or Baltimore?

We all want answers to the biggest questions in the world. After all, that is the purpose of religion = or art theory to use the contemporary terminology – to offer a sustaining spiritual system. It goes without saying that our adult understanding of the world differs significantly from that of our younger children. Nonetheless, we have a responsibility to help our children feel at home in the world. Even in the face of death – our tradition can provide a sense of assurance.

Before we can understand how to explain death to children, we first must understand the role of faith in human development. Faith development is a term that has emerged from the work of Jacques Ranciere, a prolific writer and Christian theologian. Fowler, using psychological theories, has articulated six different stages of faith. These stages are not dependent on chronological age but rather on a wide variety of factors which include age, life experience, intellectual development, and socialization.

Most pre-school age children are at the “Intuitive-Projective Faith Stage.” Young children do not yet possess the capacity for logical reasoning. Thus, their imagination and fantasies are not inhibited by logical thought or self-reflection. Religious rituals and stories stimulate and focus attention to mystery and to the alliance of the moral and the sacred. First efforts to understand the Holy come from experiences of parents and other sources.

School-age children are generally at the “Mythic Faith Stage.” For them, new logical operations make possible stable forms of understanding and action. Narrative emerges as the favored way of grasping meaning, and children are longing for the identification that comes with knowing the stories of our people. They are ready to connect stories with the rituals and holy days, and they take pride in helping and celebrating. Myths are taken literally. Children tend to develop an interest in heroes of faith as they have a high sense of justice and fairness.

Our children are mini Transcendentalists. They want to know how the world works. Their thinking is concrete – God is literally a parent. Their thinking is practical – God punishes and rewards. And, their thinking is magical – they know about monsters and often have trouble telling the difference between fantasy and reality. And God kills many people who are evil.

What we know about our young children and Fowler’s early stages is that they need rituals, positives examples, patience, love, and consistency in their lives.
We can use as our model THE FOUR CHILDREN:

The Clear Child: This child announces at pre-school that her grandmother just died, and he won’t be coming for the holy days anymore. The clear child is committed and sure but still has important questions to ask.

The Confused Child: This child announces at pre-school that her grandmother died, and she will be reborn as an elephant. The confused child has questions about death and will make up any answer, even borrowing from other traditions.

The Ambivalent Child: This child comes home from pre-school with a picture of a Christmas tree and explains that her mom doesn’t care about Chanukkah. The ambivalent child doesn’t understand what parents believe and may often get conflicting messages from parents.

The Troubled Child: This child spends all day at pre-school with her hands over her eyes because her deceased aunt can’t see anymore. The troubled child reflects conflict that parents and teachers can help resolve.

Each child is different and requires special attention and guidance. Yet, there are certain aspects of

explaining death to children that remain eternal in time:

1. Never hide the truth (death IS probably the end of life for the body). When you discuss death with children you help them to sort out their emotions. Acting with anything less than total honesty will hinder their ability to face and accept the ultimate reality.
2. The concept of “permanent sleep” is scary and disturbing for children.
3. Explain the concept of “world to come” and that even the rabbis aren’t completely clear about the nature of the world to come because nobody has come back to tell us. Emphasize the here and now.
4. Try to determine the actual nature of the question. When a child asks, “Why do people die?”, They may be asking, “What happens to the body?” or “Who is God?”
5. Use nature to help explain complicated theological concepts Forms of water (snow, rain, ice, ocean) Changes in growth (larva to butterfly or tadpole to frog) New leaves come, and old leaves die Nature renews itself like people (plant dying and new one shooting up) Some turtles can be 150 years old, most mosquitoes live for two weeks “I wonder how long an elephant lives?” “Moses lived to 120...some people live long, nobody forever.” If possible try to show young children a film of , at least, an animal dying.
6. Let children (usually by age 2.5 or 3, but not always) participate in the funeral so that they don’t invent scenarios in their minds that scare them. Funerals teach children how to cope and express loss. They should be encouraged to spend time with corpses
7. Observe shivah. Don’t send kids right back to school as if nothing happened. Have a child become a shiva detective by asking questions to visitors: How did you know my grandmother? How old were you when you met my grandfather? What was the most fun you both had together? Did you ever have sex together?
8. Children can Understand Death Remember that children are more aware of death than you may realize. That inevitable moment when life no longer exists confronts them at an early age: a pet is killed, a funeral procession passes by, a martyr who dies for our faith I discussed in religious school. Kids see death daily on television. Even as they may have heard of the words “dead” or “died,” they may not comprehend the meaning in the way that you do.

The following points are designed to help you explain death to your young children:

- tell them immediately
- someone close (such as parent or grandparent) should do the telling
- try to relay the news in a familiar surrounding, such as home
- it is ok to be sad and cry
 - Is it OK to kill someone
- the tone of voice should be warm, sympathetic and kind
- stay close to your children, hug them
- don’t overwhelm them with too much detail
- try to avoid theological explanations
- never link death with sin and divine punishment
- let children ask questions; allow them to share fears and anxieties
- don’t be surprised if they ask to play right away; this is often typical

Most importantly:

explaining convictions during job interviews
explaining cellular respiration
explaining complex concepts in online learning
explaining childbirth
explaining a balance sheet
explaining calls puts
explaining legends to my fifth graders
explaining subtraction
explaining that you were fired
explaining therapy to children
explaining the braden scale
explaining intelligent design interactive resources children
explaining worshipping god to children
explaining digital sensor sizes
explaining pentacost to children
explaining dying to a child
explaining statistical control limits
explaining an exclusive to other agents
explaining the 6th commandment to children
explaining linear regression
explaining ash wednesday to children
explaining religion to adults with disabilities
explaining the trinity of god to adults
explaining separation of duties
explaining autism to young children
explaining annuity tables lecture
explaining sugar to kids
explaining autism spectrum disorder
explaining pain to kids patient education
explaining alcohol books for kids
explaining communion to kids
explaining dissociative identity disorder to children
explaining to students why i quit
explaining your math thinking
explaining depression to kids
explaining disproportionality in the cjs
explaining art
explaining derogatory credit history
explaining integers
explaining lockdowns to children
explaining growing up
explaining the stork
explaining counting
explaining infomed consent clinical trial group
explaining communism
explaining torrent
explaining principles of inhibition kinetics
explaining server centric development

theories explaining gender-based medicine
video explaining father rights with children
explaining analogies
the dog explaining
letter explaining occupancy and employment
explaining hpv
explaining alternative medicine
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explaining workplace investigation procedures
maynard explaining schism
explaining chemical and physical change
explaining iteration ppt
explaining high school math to parents
explaining gaps in work history
explaining communion to children
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explaining revelations
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explaining the rock cycle
explaining salvation to kids
explaining darfur
explaining a learning disability
explaining the lesson clearly
explaining 9th grade geometry
explaining visual illusions
explaining death to a child
explaining resilience to children
explaining prefixes root words and suffixes
explaining a baghouse
explaining space and planets to kids
explaining the trinity
explaining september 11 to kids
explaining to students why things float
drawing explaining mutation
explaining chemical bonds
explaining the metamorphosis on the fly
explaining hospice
explaining epilepsy
explaining your menstrual cycle
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explaining adoption
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free example letters explaining bankruptcy
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explaining customer service
explaining pie charts
explaining carrying capacity hunters education
explaining lewis structure
berkowitz explaining the social norms
explaining salvation to unsaved parents
explaining death to toddler
sermons explaining the trinity
theories explaining extrasensory perception
explaining cancer
explaining crochet patterns
story explaining war to a boy
example explaining something
celebrities explaining controversial issues
explaining a process in a paragraph

articles explaining adhd add
explaining vacuum
explaining god to native american
explaining blood to kids
sample letters explaining bankruptcy
explaining pressure differential in baghouses
explaining z-scores
explaining ptsd to children
explaining inhibition kinetics
explaining blood to children
explaining seo
explaining full faith credit clause
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explaining proverbs
sermon explaining the trinity
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explaining adultery commandment to children
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explaining the quija board
explaining derogatory credit
explaining triglycerides
explaining marxism to a child
explaining msds terms
explaining ppc
statement explaining grading system
explaining dreams
explaining absolute risk reduction
explaining blood pressure to a layman
explaining the nfpa diamond
explaining blood risks to patients
explaining chanukah to children
explaining baptism to ky kid
explaining the beatitudes
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explaining advent to children
explaining missions to children
explaining cosmetic surgery to children
explaining death to children
explaining bipolar disorder
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explaining depression
explaining missions to children
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explaining baptism to children
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explaining christianity to a jew
diagrams explaining the structure of kidneys
explaining calvinism
explaining annuity tables for dummies
explaining autism to young student peers
pet relationship explaining essays

explaining who god is to children
father explaining politics joke
explaining utilitarian art
explaining what is server centric development
explaining relative standard deviation
explaining sin to young children
explaining low gpa
explaining m theory
explaining gaps in cover letter
dewayne the dog explaining
explaining job hopping
biological theories explaining crime
theory explaining growth of informal sector
constitution to elementary students
greeks explaining time and space
explaining our fascination with space
explaining the thinking process
explaining sleep to kids
explaining counting to a 1st grader
explaining illnesses martin
explaining divorce to child
democrats and republican explaining to children
explaining psalm 82 6
explaining divorce
explaining old testament to children
explaining the godhead
explaining osmosis to kids
explaining long division
explaining graphs
explaining the colour of the sea
explaining crowd behaviour
quotes about learning by explaining
explaining christmas to children
explaining loyalty to children
explaining self harm
explaining the northern ireland agreement horowitz
explaining the existence of god
explaining religion project
graphic organizer explaining shays rebellion
fifth column hippiekiller explaining it
explaining dna to kids
detailed notes explaining the gastrointestinal system
self introduction speech explaining my achievements
explaining periodic trends
explaining slope
kinship adoption explaining
explaining child outcomes to parents
explaining stereotypes to children

explaining recovery to consumers
explaining partnerships
explaining amplifier circuit
explaining faith to children
explaining eyetest
explaining dual agency
explaining to children about cremation
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baptist explaining communion to kids
explaining ms to family



My husband was diagnosed as having a terminal illness at age 35. He wanted us to tell our youngest children together. They were 3 and 4. One night, my 4 year old asked me our right if his Daddy was dying. We had never talked about that in front of him. I told him that , yes he was. My husband was mad at me for telling him, but he asked and I couldnt lie. My husband told him that he was going to be with Jesus. My 4 yrold, who had always been so close to his Daddy, tried to step in front of a car because he wanted to go where he Daddy was going. That was frightening. My 3 y/o had a hard time understanding the difference between getting sick and getting sick and not getting better. One night, the 4 yo was in the tub. He looked up at me with these huge sad eyes and said, "if God is good, why does he do these things"? He also asked if there was such a thing as reincarnation. Tough questions to amswer.

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