

Recommended Books for Talking With Kids About Death

Age Range: 3+

The Purple Balloon (Picture Book)

by: Chris Raschka

When a child becomes aware of his pending death (children tend to know long before the rest of us even want to consider it), and is given the opportunity to draw his feelings, he will often draw a blue or purple balloon, released and unencumbered, on its way upward. Healthcare professionals have discovered that this is true, regardless of a child's cultural or religious background, and researchers believe that this is symbolic of the child's innate knowledge that a part of them will live forever. In disarmingly simple and direct language, Raschka creates a moving, sensitive book that is also a phenomenally useful tool to talk about death. The message of the book is clear: talking about dying is hard, dying is harder, but there are many people in your life who can help.

The Invisible String

by: Patrice Karst

Children of all ages (and adults too) feel a great sense of peace and joy realizing that we are all connected to the ones that we love (pets, friends, grandparents, cousins etc...and especially those that have passed on) through the invisible string: a string that can never be lost, cut, or torn; a string that can reach all the way to the moon or down to the ocean floor; strings that anger, time, or bad feelings can never make go away.

Saying Goodbye

by: Jim and Joan Boulden

Children follow Buddy as he learns about the cycle of life in a sensitive and caring way. The story and activities engage children and allow them to learn at their own pace in a non-threatening presentation accompanied by a healing discussion of emotional issues. *Saying Goodbye* has color-in cartoons, drawings and activities to help children understand the finality of absence while being offered the assurance of the continuity of love.

Available at www.compassionbooks.com

I Know I Made it Happen

by: Lynn Bennett Blackburn

This book looks at feelings when there's a family fight, a divorce, illness, injury and death and gives kids support and understanding during crises. It's nice to know, though, that my wishes, and my thoughts, and my words, don't make bad things happen.

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Age Range: 4+

Badger's Parting Gifts (picture book)

by: Susan Varley

A touching look at death, and how life goes on, Badger's friends are saddened by his passing, but they come to realize that everyone lives on through their gifts of kindness and the happy memories that remain.

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf; A Story of Life for all Ages

by: Leo Buscaglia

A warm, wonderfully wise and strikingly simple story about a leaf named Freddie. How Freddie and his companion leaves change with the passing seasons, finally falling to the ground with winter's snow, is an inspiring allegory illustrating the delicate balance between life and death.

I Miss You: A First Look at Death

by: Path Thomas

When a close friend or family member dies, it can be difficult for children to express their feelings. This book helps boys and girls understand that death is a natural complement to life, and that grief and a sense of loss are normal feelings for them to have following a loved one's death. Titles in this sensitively presented series explore the dynamics of various relationships experienced by children of preschool through early school age. Kids are encouraged to understand personal feelings and social problems as a first step in dealing with them.

The Saddest Time

by: Normal Simon

A child experiencing the loss of a loved one is the subject of these three gentle stories. While each presents a different scenario (death by illness, accident, or old age), all of the stories address children's sad feelings and present different coping strategies.

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney

by: Judith Viorst

When his cat Barney dies, a boy tries to think of 10 good things to say about his pet at the funeral. But he is only able to think of nine good things, until a conversation with his father helps him to discover the truth.

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Age Range: 5+

Lifetimes; The Beautiful Way to Explain Death To Children

by: Bryan Mellonie Page

When the death of a relative, a friend, or a pet happens, or is about to happen, how can we help a child to understand? *Lifetimes* is a moving book for children of all ages, even parents too. It lets us explain life and death in a sensitive, caring, beautiful way. *Lifetimes* tells us about beginnings, about endings and about living in between. With large, wonderful illustrations, it tells about plants, animals and people. It tells that dying is as much a part of living as being born. It helps us to remember and understand.

The Next Place

by: Warren Hanson

This is the book that has brought healing to the many families and friends who have lost loved ones in our recent national tragedies. It is an inspirational journey of peace, comfort and hope, to a place where earthly hurts are left behind. It is a picture book for all ages, a beautifully-illustrated celebration of life, and an immeasurable comfort to those who have lost someone dear. Its gentle message makes *The Next Place* an excellent gift book for the bereaved and an inspirational book for the dying.

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death

by: Laurie Krasny Brown

Unlike many books on death for little ones, this one doesn't tell a story. Instead, it addresses children's fears and curiosity head-on, and in a largely secular fashion, by answering some very basic questions: "Why does someone die?" "What does *dead* mean?" "What comes after death?" Other questions deal with emotions, and there's a section about death customs. The forthright approach makes the subject seem less mysterious and provides kids with plenty to think about and discuss with their parents. It's the brightly colored artwork, however, that will really enable children to relax with the concept.

What Happens When Someone Dies: A Child's Guide to Death and Funerals

by: Michaelene Mundy

This book helps children as they first experience the reality—and the mystery—of death and funerals. Mundy carefully explains to children how we celebrate the life of a departed one through both sadness and joy. A sampling of the titles of the various booklet sections: Why Do People Die? Does It Hurt to Die? What Happens at the Funeral Home? What Will It Be Like at the Church Service? What Happens at the Cemetery? What Can I Do About My Sad Feelings? What Will Heaven Be Like? When Will Everything Be OK Again? This book offers a helpful and truthful guide.

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Goodbye Forever

by: Jim Boulden

Buddy and his dog, Ruffy, help children understand the concept of death as a natural process. Issues include how death is different from sleep, saying good-bye, burial, and accepting the feelings of anger, sadness and guilt. Extensive illustrations invite coloring and discussion.

Sad Isn't Bad: A Good Grief Guide for Kids Dealing with Loss

by: Michaelene Mundy

A well-crafted summary of the grief process, the book has 14 sections of two to three paragraphs that discuss the various aspects of grief, and the ways people cope with the death of loved ones. Written for a young audience, the material is valuable for all ages. While assuming the concept of life after death, this book is sensitive to differences in religious belief and practices and provides opportunities for the young reader to think, to ask questions, and to grow. The illustrations are clever and interesting to young children; they support the message in the text. An introductory message to adults who are working with children offers additional insights and ideas for working through grief.

The Moon Balloon: A Journey of Hope and Discovery for Children and Families

by: Joan Drescher

This book provides a safe, supportive outlet to help you and your children cope with the problems of everyday living, as well as life changing experiences. Playful hot-air balloons, representing various emotions, offer vehicles whereby children can write and draw feelings which can otherwise be difficult to speak about. Sharing these symbols can improve self-image, trust, and creativity. This book is for children, parents, teachers, healthcare professionals and all those concerned with bringing emotional healing to children.

Recommended Books for Talking With Kids About Death

School Age

What on Earth do you do when Someone Dies?

by: Trevor Romain

Romain talks directly to kids about what death means and how to cope. He asks the kinds of questions kids have about death — Why? How? What next? Is it my fault? What's a funeral?—in basic, straightforward terms. He describes and discusses the overwhelming emotions involved in grieving (sadness, fear, anger, guilt) and offers practical strategies for dealing with them. He also suggests meaningful ways to remember and honor the person who has died. When someone dies, adults are often involved with their own loss and grief and not as available to children as they might otherwise be. This little book, full of concrete advice and expressive illustrations, offers the comfort and reassurance that children need during these difficult times. Written to and for kids, it's also recommended for parents and other relatives, educators, counselors, and youth workers.

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Workbook Suggestions

After a Death: An Activity Book for Children

from: **The Dougy Center**

This easy to use workbook is designed for children who have experienced any type of death. With a mixture of creative activities and tips for dealing with changes at school, home and with friends, this is a great tool for all grieving children. We've included a variety of drawing and writing exercises to help children remember the person who died and learn new ways to live with the loss. **Age Range: All**

Beyond the Rainbow: A Workbook for Children in the Advanced Stages of a Very Serious Illness

by: **Marge Eaton Heegaard**

Age Range: School Age

Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins: A Journal for Teenagers Dealing with a Loss

Teens can write letters, copy down meaningful lyrics, write songs and poems, tell the person who died what they want them to know, finish business and use their creativity to work through the grieving process. **Age Range: Teenagers**

Weird is Normal: When Teenagers Grieve

by: **Jenny Lee Wheeler**

A self-help book for grieving teens written by an actively grieving teen. Author Jenny Lee Wheeler lost her father to cancer when she was fourteen and validates for her peers that they have the right to grieve in their own way and according to their own timetable, that their grief attacks might be different from those of adults around them, and that they aren't going crazy if they see signs from their loved one. Dr. Heidi Horsley writes in the foreword, "Teen grief is often overlooked and unacknowledged...Jenny's journey will strike a note with teenagers everywhere who have experienced the loss of someone they love."

Age Range: Teenagers

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Religious / Christian

Waterbugs & Dragonflies: Explaining death to Young Children

by: [Doris Stickney](#)

Explaining death to a child can be confusing, both for you and for the child. This fable of water bugs transforming into dragon flies is an excellent way to help children to understand what happens after someone dies: that we don't know. An excellent way to begin discussions with children on death and what happens after we die.

Tell me About Heaven

by: [Randy Alcorn](#)

As Jake and Grandpa fish, watch the stars, and take long walks, Grandpa shares what the Bible says about the reality and beauty of heaven, and Jake is comforted by learning where Grandma is. Breathhtakingly illustrated by Ron DiCianni, Alcorn's simple, loving story will help grieving children and adults alike.

What's Heaven?

by: [Maria Shriver](#)

[A more generalized book about heaven](#)

What's Heaven? is the story of Kate, a little girl whose great-grandma has just died. She seeks answers, and her mother helps her learn about Heaven. The many questions in this book are real, coming from Shriver's own children, nieces, and nephews when her grandmother, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, passed away. With 900,000 copies of the book now in print, the loving, confident, and ultimately uplifting answers Shriver provides are helping readers' families come together, feel closer to one another, and experience peace during the times when they need it most.

What about Heaven?

by: [Kathleen Long Bostrom](#)

[Includes scripture to answer questions](#)

What about Heaven? is the next book in the best-selling Little Blessings line, using captivating art from Care Bears artist Elena Kucharik, along with wonderful text from Kathleen Bostrom. Preschool children and adults alike can explore the mysteries of heaven.

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Religious / Jewish Tradition

Where is Grandpa Dennis?

by: **Michelle Abraham**

With warmth and tenderness, Michelle Shapiro Abraham's moving story book, featuring beautiful illustrations by Janice Fried, gently teaches Jewish traditions for remembering the loved ones we've lost. It does so through the story of a young girl learning about her Grandpa Dennis, the man for whom she was named but never knew.

Wishes For One More Day

by: **Melanie Joy Pastor**

A grandfather's death inspires his grandchildren to create a book of wishes in this sensitive portrayal of dealing with the loss of a loved one. When Anna and her little brother Joey hear the sad news about their Poppy's death, they begin to think about what they would do if they could have one more day with him. They smile thinking about Poppy's crazy birthday hat, giggle at the silly songs Poppy used to plunk out on the piano, and they laugh out loud at the weekly chicken-soup game they played with him at the deli. As their list of to-dos grow into a pile, the pile becomes a book - a book of wishes for one more day with Poppy (or, as their mother explains, a memory book of the love and fun they shared with him, since all of their wishes have already come true). This treasured memento celebrates Poppy's life and helps Anna and Joey keep his memory alive for years to come.

When a Grandparent Dies: A Kid's Own Remembering Workbook for Dealing with Shiva and the Year Beyond

by: **Nechama Liss-Levinson, Ph.D.**

The death of a grandparent is often a child's first encounter with grief. Why did this happen? What should I do? How do I feel? This workbook helps children to participate in the process of mourning and overcome the awkwardness that often accompanies their participation in grieving rituals. Drawing insights from both psychology and Jewish tradition, *When a Grandparent Dies* offers children guided exercises, rituals, and places to write, draw, list, create, and express their feelings. The book is appropriate for children aged 7 to 11. The workbook moves from the immediacy of Shiva through the entire year of mourning. Children and parents who use this book together will have a unique opportunity for sharing as they come to know more about themselves, their family, and the complexities of life and death.

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A Candle for Grandpa: A Guide to the Jewish Funeral for Children and Parents

by: David Techner and Judith Hirt-Manheimer

This illustrated story sensitively explains the Jewish view of death and funeral practices and rituals to young children. It also includes a glossary of Jewish funeral terms and a "Q & A" of most frequently asked questions by children and parents.

Where Do People Go When They Die?

by: Minda Avra Portnoy

Young children ask adults this question: Where do people go when they die? Although each reassuring answer is different, they all lead back to the same simple truth: When people die, "they go to God, who is everywhere." This book includes an afterward and helpful suggestions for parents.

Julia's Kitchen

by: Brenda A. Ferber

Cara Segal is a born worrier. She figures her worrying works like a whisper in God's ear. If Cara's concerned about car crashes, kidnappings, or murders, she lets God know, and he always spares her. But Cara never thought to worry about a fire. One night, while she's sleeping at a friend's house, Cara's house catches fire, and her mother and younger sister are both killed. Throughout Shiva, the initial Jewish mourning period, Cara can't help but worry about God's role in the tragedy. And what is her father's role in her life now? He walks around like a ghost and refuses to talk about the fire. Cara longs for her family and her home, where sweet smells filled the house as Cara's mom filled orders for her catering business, Julia's Kitchen. Then one day a call comes in for a cookie order, and Cara gets a wild idea: maybe by bringing back Julia's Kitchen, she can find a way to reconnect with everything she's lost.

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Resources books for parents by Alan Wolfelt:

Healing a Parent's Grieving Heart:

100 Practical Ideas After Your Child Dies

Healing Your Grieving heart For Kids:

100 Practical Ideas

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens:

100 Practical Ideas

Healing a Child's Grieving Heart:

100 Practical Ideas for Families, Friends and Caregivers