

Talking to children about illness, death, and dying



Ipswich and
East Suffolk





Talking to children about illness, death, and dying



Talking to children about a serious illness or the death of someone they love is hard, but it's important.



This guide will help you talk to children in a way they can understand.



There is no right or wrong thing to say.



It's ok just to tell them the facts of what has happened.



Explain things based on the child's age and what they can understand.



Sit with them so they know you are there.



Let them know they can talk about it whenever they are ready.



Create a safe space



Choose a quiet place like at home.



Turn off the TV and phones so there are no distractions.



Make sure the child feels comfortable.



You can give them something to hold, like a toy or a ball, while you talk.



Ways to make it easier



Talking can be easier while doing something else.



You could draw, take a walk, or go on a car ride.



Don't force them to talk.

It's ok if they don't want to talk right away.



Let them know you are ready to listen whenever they are ready to speak



Understanding how children may react



Different reactions are normal.



Children might not react right away.



They might cry, get angry or even laugh.

All of these feelings are normal.



It's just as important to listen as it is to talk.



Children might have their own thoughts or questions.



Answer their questions honestly.



If you don't know the answer, it's ok to say you don't know.

You can say you will find out the answer.

Simple

Use simple and clear language



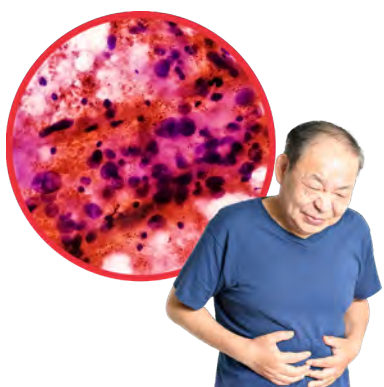
Be careful not to use words that might confuse them.



For example, don't say someone has "gone to sleep" because children might think they will wake up again.



If you need to use a medical word, like “tumour”, explain what it means in simple words.



For example, you could say, “A tumour is something that makes someone very sick, but it’s not something you can catch like a cold.”



Keep it simple for younger children.



For example, you could say, “Grandma is very sick, and the medicine isn’t working anymore.”



Remember



There's no perfect way to have these conversations.



What matters most is that you are honest, present, and willing to listen.



This helps children feel safe and supported during difficult times.



Tell us what you think



Hearing about your experience of St Elizabeth Hospice can help us to improve our services.



Hearing about your experience of St Elizabeth Hospice can also help us to provide better care and support for those who need it.



You can make a comment or **complaint** or **compliment** us on something we've done well.



A **complaint** is to say something is unfair, unacceptable or otherwise not up to normal standards.



A **compliment** is to say something good about someone or something



You can do this by writing a letter and sending it to:

St Elizabeth Hospice, 565 Foxhall Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 8LXs



or you can visit:

stelizabethhospice.org.uk

You can contact us in a number of different ways.

Phone number: 0300 303 5196

Email: emotionalwellbeing@stelizabethhospice.org.uk

Address: St Elizabeth Hospice, 565 Foxhall Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 8LX

Website: stelizabethhospice.org.uk

Facebook: St Elizabeth Hospice

Instagram: @stelizabethhospice

LinkedIn: st-elizabeth-hospice

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