



MOONFLOWER

Therapeutic Arts Center LLC

Moonflower is a counseling center focused on supporting individuals who are experiencing grief or processing a traumatic experience.

Speaking about Death

MOONFLOWER

Growing through each phase



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Death, grief, and loss are natural life experiences, yet they are often difficult and uncomfortable to address. During end of life care or after a death, caregivers often have questions about how to speak to youth about death and dying.

In this resource, we will focus on language to help you start the conversation.



When preparing to speak to a youth about death or dying it is helpful to be CLEAR. Consider the following:

CHECK IN with yourself.

- Take a moment to center yourself. Allow yourself time to have the conversation with out worrying about other things and plan ahead for the support you might need.

LISTEN with out trying to fix it.

- It is common for there to be big grief responses when someone learns about the dying of or death of a special person. Consider being present, in lieu of trying to fix or change the grief response. The expectation to this is if there are self harming behaviors or safety concerns present.

EXPLAIN what you can.

- Not all aspects need to be addressed in one conversation. Be honest, if you do not know the answer.

ALLOW for grief responses.

- Keep in mind, grief can look like many things. Grief is unique to the individual. Be patient with yourself and the youth as you adjust to the news and forth coming changes.

REASSURANCE may be needed.

- Often youth will require reassurances that they are safe and need reminders of who is there to support them.



LANGUAGE SUGGESTIONS

For young grievors, it is helpful to use concrete language versus abstract language. Abstract language is vague and, depending on the age of the youth, confusing.

Abstract: They are sleeping.

Concrete: {Name of the deceased} died.

Abstract: They have passed.

Concrete: {Name of the deceased}'s body stopped working. They can no longer feel pain.

Due to how a youth's brain development, some euphuisms for death may cause other anxieties. Concrete language is simple and easier for a youth to understand. However, be prepare to repeat the information. It may take time for the youth to fully understand.



LANGUAGE SUGGESTIONS

When speaking to a youth about a complicated death such as death by suicide, homicide, sudden illness, sudden accident, etc. It can be helpful to be as honest and concise as you feel comfortable being.

Concrete: {Name of the deceased} made their body stop working.

Concrete: {Name of the deceased} died. I do not have all the information at this time about what happened but I am here for you. You are safe. I will do my best to answer any questions you have.

It is okay to not have all the answers. "I don't know" is an honest answer. It is important to reassure the youth they are safe, to allow them space to react, and have an invitation to ask questions or talk to you when they are ready.



LANGUAGE SUGGESTIONS

The top 3 phrases for adults to be willing to use with youth about a death loss:

Dead

Died

The body stopped working

Concrete: Since {Name of the deceased} died, I have been missing them a lot. I wonder if there is something we can do together to remember them.

Concrete: [Name of the deceased]'s system could not handle the amount of substance they took. [Name] died from an overdose.

Remember that grief can look like many things. Grief can be sad, mad, grateful, numb, loud, quiet, scared, etc. Grief can and will change. For young grievers, this is especially true. As their brain develops so does their understand of the death loss.



GROWING THROUGH EVERY PHASE.
YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

Support and resources are available for grieving individuals.
Moonflower Therapeutic Arts Center LLC is proud to be a
resource to promote growth and healing.

Please contact us to learn more about our serves at
moonflowergrowing@outlook.com or 956.893.0334.