

**Transcript of Talking to Children who are Bereaved Video Script**

**Introduction**

**NARRATOR** Talking to children when they are about to be bereaved or have just experienced a death may feel daunting. Knowing how children of different ages may react can help. Listen to these views from children who have been bereaved in real life.

**Scene 1**

**BOY (10)** I found it hard to know what I was supposed to do when I saw my Mum. Maybe the doctor could've helped me to know where her body was hurting and where we needed to be careful if we touched her. Even my little brother who's 6 wanted to know what was happening. He could tell that Mum wasn't well. It would've helped if someone we trusted had said what was going on in simple words and that she might die.

**GIRL (8)** Grown-ups who have to tell us that someone has died should make sure that they use the word dead, and should make sure that we know what that means. They could say "I'm sorry but your Mummy's heart has stopped working and it won't start working again. That means that she's died. Being dead means that your body and your head don't work anymore. Mummy can't talk, or see, or hear, or eat, or move or feel anything anymore.

**NARRATOR** Most primary school age children understand the difference between people who are alive and people who are dead. Even though they're often good at saying or showing how they're feeling, they might hide it and look like they're not affected. Help parents include their children in events around the time of death, and let them ask questions. Remember that they're starting to understand that everybody dies, including themselves and other members of their family. This can be a very scary thing to come to terms with.

**Scene 2**

**TEENAGER** I was really upset that I didn't get to see her when she was dying. I wanted to be given the choice. I think it would have helped to have had someone encourage my family to talk about it... to say that this is always going to hurt, and this is one time they can't stop us hurting, but at least we can share our feelings together. It's much harder for us if we're not included.

**NARRATOR** Through adolescence, teenagers who are bereaved will be increasingly aware of the impact of a death in their lives. They may challenge the beliefs

and explanations given by others. They might prefer talking to friends, or they might withdraw or get angry. If all their questions are not answered, they're likely to look things up online, which may well be more upsetting.

### Scene 3

**NARRATOR** Very small children have heard about people dying, but they may see death as temporary, so they can get confused and think that people might be able to come back. Avoid euphemisms like "lost" or "passed away". Reassure them that it wasn't anything that they said, thought or did that caused the person to die. Be honest with them about the cause of death, even if it's very traumatic. However old they are, find a way to tell them that is suitable for their age and understanding. Give them the choice whether to see the person who has died. And tell them ahead what it's going to be like in the room, and what the body will look and feel like. If you tell them that it'll look like "Daddy's asleep", remember to say that it's not like when *we're* sleeping, because we can wake up. Babies don't have the language to express their loss. But will notice when someone's gone. They will miss their voice and smell and can pick up on grief around them. They can also sense when their routine has changed. Encourage those looking after babies to minimise changes, and to help build memories of the person who has died.

### Scene 4

**NARRATOR** As a healthcare professional there are many ways for you to help families, friends, schools and communities do and say things before and after someone dies that will help children cope with their loss. About a third of children will need some professional help to deal with bereavement, but most of them will get by with the support of their family. The way children experience death can affect how they'll deal with it later on in life. Even if you're busy, find a way to include them. Be open and honest, listen and answer their questions. If they understand what happened and know that the death wasn't their fault, they'll be better equipped to deal with their grief in the future, as they find their new normal.

The film was produced in March 2016 and can be found at [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) or <https://vimeo.com/167887527>

For more information visit [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) or contact [supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk)