

Ways to talk to children about the Suicide of a Loved One

Define suicide as when “someone chooses to make his or her body stop working.”

Give age appropriate facts and explanations.

Talk with the child about their beliefs. Help the child put their loved one in a place. Placing the loved one helps the child compartmentalize and understand that their loved one is not with them anymore. If you need help explaining age appropriate facts to your child then seek professional counsel.

Dispel myths about suicide.

Not everyone that is sad commits suicide. Suicide is a choice or decision that is made and carried out. Because your loved one is gone this doesn't mean that they didn't love you very much. You did not cause this to happen.

Retell good memories.

Paint or draw memories. Create a memory box. Share memories with each other and put your favorite pictures up in your room or in the house. Watch old home videos together and go through scrap books together. Let your child tell you their favorite memories with the loved one. Share one each day. Talk about the things you miss and talk about in what ways you are like or not like your loved one.

Model feelings and thoughts for children.

Help children process what has happened. Tell them it's okay to cry or to be angry sometimes. Talk about ways to cope with what's happened. What are some healthy things we can do to take care of ourselves and make ourselves feel better? List these with your child and help them to carry them out when they are stressed and overwhelmed with emotions. Model healthy coping skills for your child.