



All Ready To Go



TALKING WITH THE CHILDREN



ABOUT

Stephen Garrett

“All Ready To Go” Talking With The Children

Stephen has experienced success in life as a teacher, an investment banker, a social worker, and author. His greatest achievement though is his courage in the midst of adversity. Along with his success, Stephen has faced tremendous loss and difficulty in his life. What makes Stephen as a man more profound than his many accomplishments is his choice to remain open, loving and steadfast in the midst of hardship.

What truly makes the mark of this man is his lifetime of service. Stephen exudes what is possible when you live your life in alignment with your own deepest purpose. He lives from the Truth he has discovered within. He makes it possible for others to do the same. Stephen is known for his exceptional commitment to each and every person that crosses his path.

Stephen’s heart’s passion and life energy is focused on changing the conversation we have about death from one of fear and denial to one of embrace and inspiration.

He has prepared this workbook based on his practical approach to life, his skills as a banker, compassion as a coach and trainer, and his fiery passion to serve others.

You can learn more about his work on embraceyourdeath.com. You can learn more about his training at endoflifeguidetraining.com.

You can find Stephen on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).



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INTRODUCTION

“Let your children know grief is a journey you can take together”

When Death Speaks – Listen, Learn, and Love

Children feel deeply and, yes, they feel differently, perhaps not as filtered as adults. They experience the same ‘stuff’ we adults do; however, they process it differently given their limited time on the planet and their world-view from a child’s perspective.

As adults and parents it is not our job to shelter our children from dying, death, and grief. It is our responsibility to teach and coach our kids to help them deal with loss in a healthy, full, and real way. We do this by being authentic ourselves, first and foremost.

Then we teach and guide our kids as they walk along their path with grief. We answer their questions truthfully and in language they can understand. We avoid ‘softening’ reality by using phrases like “Grandpa is resting,” or “Grandmother is in a better place.” Simply, compassionately and gently, we respond to their curiosity.

This kit will give you some ideas, understanding, and approaches you can put into practice with your children. Helping your kids in this way will prepare them well for other types of losses in life and also enhance their appreciation for being alive.



MYTH ABOUT CHILDREN AND GRIEF

Children need to be protected from the pain of loss.

Don't use words like dying, died, or death. They are too harsh for children.

Seeing a dead or dying loved one will traumatize a child.

These myths are disempowering our children with their underlying message that we think they are unable to learn how to deal with these real life issues. Ignore them! They lead you and your kids down the wrong path.

Here is a reframe of these incorrect myths:

Children need to be coached when dealing with the emotions loss brings.

Words themselves are not hurtful. Use direct language and be gentle and clear. Allowing your children to say good-bye physically, to see dying and death, is supportive of them appreciating life.



HOW MUCH SHOULD I TELL THEM?

In a nutshell, as much as they can handle.

Each child has their own capacity for information and they will show you they are full with indirect communication signals such as changing the subject, getting fidgety, averting their eyes or starting to play with a toy.

Each child has her or his own vocabulary and levels of understanding. Remember they do not have adult comprehension, so use words they are familiar with. Speak to them in their language, at their level of understanding.

Give them a bit at a time, and over time make sure they have the full picture. What this means is asking them some questions to see what it is they have understood. If there is a misunderstanding, lovingly make the correction so they do have the complete story.

Remember, speaking to a child in their language is not the same as speaking down to them.



A FEW THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT KIDS AND GRIEF

Children have a much smaller capacity to hold and express grief and the emotions associated with loss. They will generally grieve or emote in smaller bits and pieces. Don't be surprised if they cry a bit and then run off and play. They may also start talking about the death of their loved one and then change the subject more quickly than an adult would.

Kids also have fewer words to describe their grief. Their emotional toolbox is still growing and evolving, so they will not have access to the finer emotions, tending to simply be sad, mad, happy or angry. The older the child the more ability she or he has to recognize the more subtle emotions and to articulate and express them.

You can support your children by empowering them to grieve their own way and by coaching them to recognize what it is they feel and how they can express it in a full and healthy way. Walk with them along their path of grief until they are competent to do so themselves.



PRE AND POST VISITS TO THE HOSPITAL OR CARE HOME

Hospitals can be pretty daunting places for most people. This is especially true for children and particularly pre-teens. Further adding to the stress of the environment is the factor of a loved one who is lying in one of those hospital beds and may have tubes and machines hooked up to them - machines that may make noises and look a little disturbing. There will also be nurses and doctors all dressed in uniforms that are unfamiliar for most children.

What works well is to pre-frame or pre-describe the scene your child will be walking into. Give him or her a chance to prepare. Answer their questions in plain language so they can understand what it is they will be walking into. Setting the scene this way supports the child to feel more confident, knowing what they are going to see. Importantly, ask them if they would like to go. Forcing a child is as traumatic as is not letting them go to the hospital if they want to.

Here is an example of what you could say:

“Grandma will be in a room with one other person and there will be curtains all around her. She will have some tubes under her nose to help her breathe and a tube on her arm that is helping her not feel too much pain.”

This description provides just enough information to set the scene in language a child can understand.

It is also important not to force the child to overstay their comfort zone. Remember your child has lower tolerance for this kind of emotional situation than you do. When they need to leave, take them home or bring a family member or caregiver to be with them elsewhere while you visit.

When you get home check in with your kids to see how it was for them and how they are doing. Telling them the truth is reassuring, as they can feel what is real and what is not.



PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR THE FUNERAL/ CREMATION SERVICES

Prepare your child for the funeral, burial, cremation or celebration of life in the same way as you did for the hospital or care home visit.. Let your children know what they are walking into and what they might expect.

Describe to him or her the setting, how many people might be there, what the casket will look like, whether or not their loved one be visible, what people might be doing, whether it will be quiet or loud and what is expected of them.

You might consider taking them to the site before the service so they can see it firsthand.

As with a hospital or care home visit, check in with your kids when you get home, to give them a chance to debrief and ask any questions they may have.



HELPING YOUR CHILD REMEMBER

You may want to create a special quiet place in your house where you and your children can go to remember their deceased loved one. Pictures and memorabilia would be fun to have there. From time to time you can sit there together and remember the family member who is no longer with you. It is a gentle way to coach your kids, too, and a way you can bond and build your relationship even more deeply.



CONTACT

For more information you can visit the website at

embraceyourdeath.com

This guide is part of a free series of resources available at

endoflifeguidetraining.com

Here is a list of the free guides:

[All Ready To Go: Create Your Own Death Binder](#)

[All Ready To Go: Talking With The Children](#)

[All Ready To Go: Talking With The Funeral Director](#)