

# Helping children cope with grief

during the COVID-19 pandemic



With isolation measures in place during COVID-19, saying last goodbyes in person may not be possible when a loved one passes on.

**Dr Kang Ying Qi**, Consultant at the Child Development Unit, National University Hospital shares some ways to help children cope.

## Allaying worries and fears

Your child may feel worried when a loved one is sick and needs to be isolated. Assure your child that this helps the sick person recover and protects other family members from getting ill.



Give accurate information about the sick person as much as you can in an age-appropriate manner. Assure your child that most people recover and return home. However, when a loved one may not recover, be honest with your child and help him/her find a way to come to terms with that.

## Bridging the physical distance

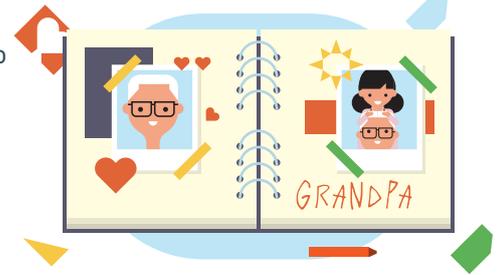


Keep in contact with the sick person through virtual platforms.

Where possible, define a time whereby a reunion can take place so that your child can look forward to it.

## Helping your child cope with loss

- **Come up with ways to memorialise the person** who has died. Consider relaxation activities and distract your child with other tasks. Maintaining routines will help your child to cope better.



- **Help your child understand that the loved one was cared for** by healthcare workers and was not alone.

Assure your child that the loved one knew how special he/she was to your child. Find a way to say goodbye remotely.

- **Your child may worry that they had caused a loved one to be ill or dead.**

Seek to understand why the child feels responsible and debunk the myths delicately. Give him/her the time and space to process this.

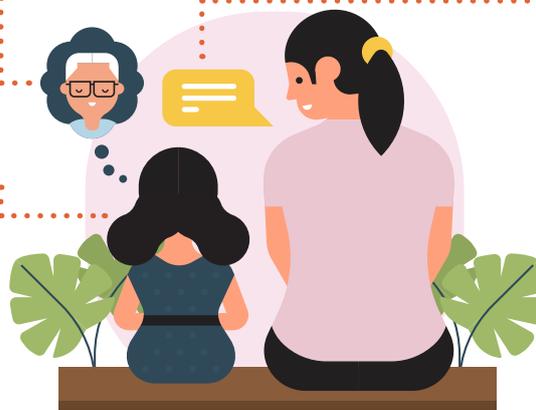
## Talking to your child about death

- **Children younger than five do not have a mature concept of time** and may repeatedly ask when a deceased person is returning.

Remind yourself to stay calm when addressing these questions.

- **Give your child opportunities to talk about death** if he/she wants to. Do not pressure your child to open up about his/her feelings if he/she is not ready to.

- **Understand your child's response to loss.** Your child may not mourn a loved one whom he/she did not interact much with. It does not mean that your child did not love that person.



- **Avoid euphemisms when describing death** to your child.

Telling him/her that the person has 'gone to sleep' or 'gone away', may lead your child to believe that a deceased loved one will come back.

Help your child understand what death means - that the person's body does not work anymore and will not return.

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