

Managing grief: How science can help guide end of life discussions with children

Last month, I [wrote about](#) how medical professionals should always provide honest and fact-based information when talking to pediatric patients about dying. Yet the question remains: What comes after death?

Children may not ask questions indicative of an existential crisis. They often ask very practical questions: What happens after we die? What will happen to me after I die? Is there a heaven? We must educate those who work with and around children: kids live in a world where death exists and we don't help them if we don't tell them, help scaffold their understanding, and better their ability to process difficult emotions.

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It can also be helpful to ask the child what they know already. What have they learned from their family? What does the child think? Children are remarkable observers. They "science" the world around them; correlation does imply causation to them. So, knowing and being able to understand their existing framework or cognitive schema(s) will help guide you in what to say. Even a child as young as 3 or 4 years old can make correlational connections.

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here](#)