

# TALKING WITH CHILDREN AND TEENS ABOUT SUICIDE AND VIOLENT DEATHS

Be In A Neutral, Safe Setting

Have Some Of Their Favorite Adults Present

Use Age Appropriate Language

Deliver Information in Bite-Size Pieces

Be Prepared For Mixed

Give Physical And Creative Outlets

It's Ok To Talk About The Person Who Died

## 3-6 YEAR OLDS



**Suicide:** They made their body stop working.

**Homicide:** Someone hurt his body so bad that his body stopped working and he died.

**How To Help:** Play, physical activity, creative outlets, maintain routines and structure, reassure them that they are safe and loved

**Normal Grief Responses:** Regressive behaviors, repetitive questions/play, crying, clinginess, increase in fears, acting out behaviors, unclear about finality of death

## 7-11 YEAR OLDS



**Suicide:** Your person caused their own death. This is called suicide.

**Homicide:** Someone killed your dad. He is no longer living.

**How To Help:** Play, physical activity, creative outlets, maintain routines and structure, answer questions truthfully, address issues around fears and safety, validate their experience without judgement

**Normal Grief Responses:** Crying, shocked, confused, scared, angry, sad, acting out, regression, isolation, declining grades, curious, can feel stigma, is clear about finality of death

## 12-17 YEAR OLDS



**Suicide:** They died by suicide or, he killed himself.

**Homicide:** She was murdered.

**How To Help:** Give them space, connect them with peers who have experienced a death, maintain routines, disclose details when asked, be a good role model, ask them what they need

**Normal Grief Responses:** Angry, confused, scared, acting out, promiscuous behaviors, isolation, tearful, declining grades, can feel stigma, depressive like symptoms, changes in sleeping, eating and moods