

Honest words help kids.

Kids notice more than we think. Clear, honest words that fit their age help them feel safe, even when the news is hard. You don't need perfect answers.

1 in 12 Oregon children will lose a parent or sibling by age 18. (Judi's House/JAG Institute, 2026 CBEM Report)

What kids understand, by age:

Ages 3 to 5

May think death is temporary. Expect repeat questions.

Ages 6 to 9

Learning death is forever. May worry who's next.

Ages 10 to 12

Want facts and details. May hide big feelings.

Teens

Understand fully. Often turn to friends first.

Tips for the talk:

- **Use the word died.** Words like "passed away" or "lost" can confuse kids.
- **Keep it short.** Share a little, then let their questions lead.
- **Tell the truth.** Simple facts that fit their age, even about hard causes.
- **Expect it again.** Kids often return to the same questions for months.

After the talk:

- **Name your feelings.** It shows kids that crying and missing someone is okay.
- **Keep routines.** Bedtime, meals, and school bring comfort.
- **Invite them in.** Let kids choose if they help plan or attend the service.
- **Check back later.** Ask what they're wondering about now. Grief changes as kids grow.

Words that help:

INSTEAD OF

"We lost Grandpa."

TRY

"Grandpa died. His body stopped working."

INSTEAD OF

"Be strong for your mom."

TRY

"You don't have to be strong. I'm here."

INSTEAD OF

"You're too young for this."

TRY

"You can ask me anything, anytime."

Not sure what to say? We can help.

Cason's Place offers free peer grief support for kids, teens, and families in Eastern Oregon. Kids connect with other kids who understand, while parents and caregivers meet in their own group.

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Twice monthly •
Located in
Pendleton • Always
free • Gas help
available