

# Grief and Death

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## How to support your infant or toddler (ages birth to 3 years)

### **Grief understanding and reactions**

Toddlers may not know what the word death means. They may miss the sight, sound, feel or smell of the deceased person. A toddler may mirror an adult's grief or emotions.

They may respond to grief with:

- Anxiety
- Biting
- Bowel or bladder disturbances
- Crying
- Eating
- Irritability
- Sleeping issues
- Throwing

They may also be more clingy than usual.

### **How adults can help**

There are many things parents or caregivers can do to make death a little easier for small children to take:

- Giving love and attention, such as eye contact, touching, holding, rocking, singing and playing.
- Meet the child's physical needs, keep up with routines, provide familiar caretakers and be patient during difficult times.
- Avoid words, such as gone away, lost and gone to sleep to explain death.