

# 4 KIDS



## 'YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED'

You know you are alive when you can breathe, when you can think and when you can feel. We all are born into this world and are given life, and one day our life will stop and we will die. This is something nature has decided and it will happen to every person, animal and plant. When plants, animals and people stop being alive we say they are dead or they have died. We understand that this is how nature works but it is much harder to understand why we have to die.

### WHY DO PEOPLE DIE?

Dying is a part of life. It is not anything to be scared of. All living things die someday whether that is a tree, an animal or a person but nature usually allows most people to live for a long time.

Just like a car needs to be working to be able for someone to drive you to school, our body needs to be working to keep us alive. Sometimes people die before they are old. This will be because something has happened to the person's body that they couldn't stop and means that their body cannot work any more. This is called dying.

### DOES DYING HURT?

Doctors and nurses say that dying doesn't hurt. For sick or old people, it is like falling into a very deep sleep until they stop breathing and their heart stops working. If a person is in pain, special medicines are used by the doctors to make them not feel anything.

When someone dies in an accident, they feel no pain because everything happens so fast so they don't get frightened or feel any pain.

### WHY CAN'T DOCTORS AND NURSES STOP PEOPLE FROM DYING?

Doctors and nurses work very hard to help a sick person. Doctors and Nurses do make most people better and they go on to live for a long time. However sometimes even though the doctors and nurses have tried their best, the person still dies. This is not the Doctors or Nurses fault, the person will have died because their body was too damaged and couldn't be fixed.

### IS BEING DEAD LIKE BEING ASLEEP?

People who are dead may look as if they are sleeping but being dead is nothing at all like being asleep. We sleep to keep our bodies healthy. Sleeping allows us to store up strength. When you are asleep you can dream and wake up at any time. When you do wake up, you are not tired because your body has rested and is ready for another day.

When someone dies their body stops working. They don't dream and they won't wake up because they no longer can use their body. Their body is like an old car that has broken down and cannot be driven any more.

### HOW LONG WILL I BE ALIVE?

No one knows how long he or she will be alive for. Most people live for a very long time. Think of how many old people you see each day. However, no one is alive forever and if they were they would be very old and there would not be enough space for everyone to have a house. You, your family and friends are much more likely to be alive for a long time rather than to die young.

### WHAT HAPPENS TO THE PERSON'S BODY WHEN THEY ARE DEAD?

When someone is dead, they do not need their bodies. Their body is put in a box called a coffin. Then a special service takes place which is called a funeral where we say goodbye to the person who is dead. People are sad at funerals. You can go to a funeral if you want but you don't have to.

### CAN I SEE THE DEAD PERSON BEFORE THE FUNERAL?

Usually family and friends go to the Funeral Home to see the dead person so they can say goodbye before the funeral. The dead person will be in a coffin. They will have their eyes closed and look as though they are asleep. You may want to talk to them as if they were still alive, say goodbye or even put a photo or picture inside the coffin. The family and friends will know that the person who has died cannot hear them but talking to them as if they were alive can help the person feel better.

If you don't want to go to see them, you don't have to. If you are worried about what it will be like, talk to a grown up about how you feel. It's your choice and if you don't go to see them, it doesn't mean that you love them any less.

## WHERE DO DEAD PEOPLE GO?

Many people believe that when someone is dead, part of that person lives on and goes to another place somewhere else. The part of us that people believe moves on is not a part of the body that you can point to like your leg or hand. It is the part of the body that lets you feel love and happiness. This part of the body is called the soul. We cannot see someone's soul and it cannot come back and visit us. We also cannot see the special place where some people believe our soul goes.

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE FUNERAL?

Just as the dead person doesn't need their body any longer, we don't need to see it as well to remember the person. When somebody dies we then either bury him or her or cremate him or her. Before this is done the body of the dead person is put into a coffin. The coffin is taken to either a cemetery or crematorium.

A cemetery is a quiet place where we can go and think about the person who is dead. In a cemetery the coffin is put in a hole, which is called a grave. On the grave there will be a headstone with the dead person's name on it and you can put flowers on the grave too as a sign of respect.

A crematorium is a place where the coffin is burnt and made into ashes. This is called cremation. It doesn't hurt the dead person as they cannot feel pain. After the cremation the ashes are scattered somewhere peaceful such as the gardens at the crematorium or a place that was special to the dead person when they were alive.

## WILL I EVER SEE THE DEAD PERSON AGAIN?

A dead person cannot come back to their body again because it doesn't work any longer. You cannot see or hear a dead person again but you will be able to remember the dead person for as long as you are alive.

## WHY DID SOMEONE I LOVE VERY MUCH HAVE TO DIE?

When someone you love dies, it is very unfair. You may wonder why they had to die when you loved them so much. You might not know what you will do without the dead person being alive.

Almost everyone is loved by other people so this means that almost everyone will be missed when they die. So whoever dies, someone will think it is very unfair and ask why it had to be that person. What is important is that you loved the person who died and you miss them very much, this in itself would have made them feel special.

## WHAT IF I HAVE ARGUED WITH THE DEAD PERSON?

You may feel sad or guilty if you have argued with the person just before they died. These feelings are natural. Everybody has them. Most people still love someone who they had an argument with. Try to remember the fun you had with the dead person too.

## WAS IT MY FAULT THEY DIED?

When someone dies you might wonder if it was your fault, for being cross with him or her or for being naughty. You might even think you could have stopped them from dying if only you had done something different. Many grown ups think this too but it isn't right.

You must not feel guilty if someone you love has died. You could not have done anything to change it and it is not your fault and you couldn't have stopped it.

## WHY DO PEOPLE KILL THEMSELVES?

Sometimes when people are very unhappy or lonely they decide they do not want to live any longer so they choose to die instead. This is called committing suicide.

If someone you love does this, it doesn't mean that they loved you any less. They might have wanted to stop you from suffering from their problems. They might also have found it too hard to talk to other people about how they were feeling so no one and nothing would have been able to change this or stop them wanting to die.

## WHY DO SOME CHILDREN AND BABIES DIE?

Sometimes but not very often, children and babies die. An illness or an accident can make this happen. This makes most people unhappy and very sad.

Babies can be sick even before they are born, and this means that the baby was too ill to be born. That baby was a little person too and you and your family may still want to remember the baby even though you never saw them.

## HOW SHOULD I FEEL WHEN SOMEONE DIES?

You may feel sad, confused, angry, hurt, worried, lonely or tearful. You may not be able to believe that the person you have loved has died. Or you might feel numb which means that you can't feel anything at all. All these feelings are natural and you might feel any or all of them at different times.

#### WHY CAN'T I SLEEP?

It's hard to sleep when someone has died. When you do go to sleep you might have dreams about the person where they still alive. Some dreams may be scary. It's so sad and frightening when someone dies that our minds have to work really hard to deal with it and that's why bad dreams and sleeplessness happen. If you can't sleep, tell your parents or carers.

#### HOW CAN I STOP FEELING SO SAD?

It is natural to cry and feel sad when someone has died. You miss them, and you may feel lonely. Feeling sad is the same as feeling pain. It hurts a lot at first and it's hard to think about anything else. But each day it hurts a little bit less and some days it doesn't hurt at all.

Everyone feels sadness differently; sometimes you will be doing something you enjoy and you won't feel sad about the dead person. This is good and you must not feel that you have to show you are sad all the time. The best thing is to find things to do that you enjoy and also to talk to people about how you feel.

#### WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP ME FEEL BETTER?

There are many things that you might like to do to help you when you are feeling sad about someone dying. Please see the section 'Therapy Exercises 4Kids' for more information.

#### WHEN I GROW UP WILL I UNDERSTAND MORE ABOUT DEATH & DYING?

As we grow up we learn more about many things including death and dying. We become used to seeing programs on television and reading newspapers that tell us about people dying. This makes it easier to think about and talk about it. The more we learn about life, the better we are able to understand the part of it we call death and dying. This means that when someone dies that we know and love, it is less hard for us to deal with