

What Color is Death, Daddy?

An interactive book for the very young child
Based on a true and very sad story...

By Joanne Cacciatore

Illustrations by Ashlee Simpson, Age 9

For more information on M.I.S.S. and the Kaleidoscope Project
Please visit our website at
www.misschildren.org

© 2000 by Joanne Cacciatore, RTSC
Also the Author of "Dear Cheyenne"

M.I.S.S. Publishing
P.O. Box 5333
Peoria, Arizona 85385
623-979-1000
joanne@misschildren.org

All Rights Reserved
Do not reprint without permission

For more information on the Kindness Project
Visit www.misschildren.org
A place for families to heal from the death of a child

For more information on the Kaleidoscope Project
Email Joanne Cacciatore at joanne@misschildren.org
Or call 623-979-1000

For support after the death of a mother
Visit www.webimaj.com/momshalo

*For you, Cheyenne & Sadie... You are always in our hearts.
And for Lois, who watches them for us.*

A nonprofit 501 (c) 3 organization. All donations are tax deductible

Introduction

This book is for young children & the adults who love them to use as a tool for expression and understanding when a core family member has died. It is an interactive book to help children explore their feelings, accept and embrace the grief, and help them work through the plethora of emotions that face them in the years ahead. We encourage a primary adult to assist younger children in articulating their feelings into words. Please allow this to be a tool for open and honest discussion. Children appreciate communicating with the adults in their lives. It is a critical part of their healing.

This book is a journey...it does not need to be completed all at once. The journey is long...and we can only move mountains one stone at a time.

“Some of the most honest, truth-telling in the world is done by children.” Holmes

“There are times when sorrow seems to be the only truth.”
DeProfundis

What Color is Death?

Death (deth) , n, 1. the act of dying; the end of life; the total and permanent cessation of all the vital functions necessary to live...
-Syn. 1. decease, demise, passing departutre. -Ant. Life.

This book belongs to

In Loving Memory Of

U
nless we remember, we cannot understand.

What is death?

"I went to the hospital with grandma and grandpa," said Adam. "My Mommy and Baby Brother, Jacob, got into a bad car accident and they told me she died."

"Daddy, What is death?"

"Yes, Adam, Mommy and Jacob died today," said Adam's Daddy.

"A very bad accident happened with our car. Mommy could not help what happened. The accident wasn't her fault.

They died. Adam, I am very sad, just like you are.

I am also scared, too. We will be sad and scared together. I am here for you to talk to anytime.

You may even get angry. I will get angry with you. We still love them and we always will.

Death makes big people and little people scared and sad, angry and confused. Adam's Mom and Brother died. What happened to your loved one? Talk or write about how are you feeling now?

A Place Below for your Special Feeling Art:

But Daddy, What is Death?

“Daddy when are Mommy and Jacob coming home?”
asked Adam.

“Oh Adam, honey, they are not coming home ever again. When a
person dies, they don't come back. We can talk about
them every day and miss them everyday. We
can look at pictures together and cry,
but they aren't coming home,”
said Adam's daddy with
tears in his eyes.

It is hard to imagine the person we love is not coming back.
What is your heart feeling? What do you think about this
thing called Death?

A Place Below for your Special Feeling Art:

But, Daddy...

“But daddy, they didn’t say goodbye,” cried Adam.

“Adam, mommy and Jacob didn’t know they were going to die,” said Adam’s daddy. “They didn’t want to die. They wanted to stay here with you and I. You and I will have a chance to say goodbye in a very special way at the funeral next week.”

Many children and big people didn't have a chance to say
goodbye to their loved one. How would you like to say
goodbye and what would you like to say to them?

A Place Below for your Special Feeling Art:

Special Goodbye?

“What is a funeral, daddy? Will Mommy and Jacob be there?” asked Adam.

“Well, yes, in a way they will be there, Adam. But not in the way that you and I remember them. Their bodies will look and feel different and they won’t be able to talk to you or hug you like I know they would want to do. There will be a lot of people who will come to say goodbye and so you may feel confused. I will be there for you and I will help you to say goodbye to them,” assured Adam’s Daddy.

Have you been to the funeral or memorial service yet? If so, how did you feel? Or your special one's service is soon, how are you feeling about it? If you never were able to attend, how do you feel about not being there?

A Place Below for your Special Feeling Art:

What About Heaven, Daddy?

“Daddy, what about Heaven? Is Mommy in Heaven with Jacob?” asked Adam.

“Well, Adam, that is a good question. Daddy does believe that Mommy and Jacob are in Heaven together. They are not feeling any pain and they are not scared like us. They do miss us very much just like we miss them. But, Adam, just because we believe they are in Heaven doesn’t mean that we can’t or won’t be sad, angry, and confused,” explained Adam’s Daddy. “A very, very bad thing has happened to our family and it is okay to feel the way we do.”

Do you have any big questions for God? What do you think about Heaven?

A Place Below for your Special Feeling Art:

What Did I Do Wrong?

“Did Mommy and Jacob die because sometimes I am not a good boy?” worried Adam.

“Adam, listen to Daddy. This very bad accident was not your fault. You didn’t do anything to cause it. You were and still are Mommy’s special little boy and Jacob’s best big brother,” said Adam’s Daddy. “Our family was happy until this very bad thing happened. It is not your fault. Sometimes, when Mommy and I were sitting alone in our room at night, she would tell me that she is so grateful to have you as her little boy because of how special and wonderful you are as a son and as a big brother. You didn’t do anything wrong to cause this.”

Do you feel like you did something wrong? If not, that is good because you didn't. If so, it isn't your fault either. Write or talk about your feelings below.

A Place Below for your Special Feeling Art:

Oh No! Daddy!

“Oh no! Daddy, what happens if you die too,” cried Adam.
“Then what would happen? What would happen?”

“It is natural, Adam, to feel afraid that others who you love will die too. That is a normal process of what big people call “grief.” In a few weeks, you will not feel so afraid about me dying. Until you feel better, I will try to reassure you that I am okay. You and I will spend more time together and we can visit Mommy and Jacob a lot to bring them flowers. And I will make sure to call you more often when I go to work,” said Adam’s Daddy.
“I will do my best to help you feel secure. I love you very much, Adam.”

Does anything really scare you a lot?

A Place Below for your Special Feeling Art:

Time and Healing

“How long will we be sad, Daddy,” asked Adam.

“For a long time, Adam. Life without Mommy and Jacob will be very sad for you and I, and also for grandma and grandpa and Aunt Mandy. But we can do things to help ourselves when we feel sad. Someday soon, when we look at Mommy and Jacob’s pictures, it will help us to remember the beautiful times we shared and the big love we have for each other,” replied Adam’s Daddy. “Just like when you cut yourself and it takes some time to heal, right now, it hurts too much to feel anything but pain. But one day, just like with your cut, Healing will come and the pain won’t be as bad as it is right now. But Adam, we will always miss them and that is okay.”

We may have good memories about our family before our loved one died. Have your feelings changed?
What was your family like before their death?

Draw a picture of how you felt before your loved one died
& how you feel now

Before

After

Understanding

“Why does God let people die if it hurts their family so much,” asked Adam.

“Well, Adam, I don’t know,” answered Adam’s Daddy. “I wish I had a good answer for that question but I don’t. There are a lot of things that Daddy doesn’t understand. It is just the way things happen sometimes. God doesn’t cause it to happen but very bad things do happen to nice and loving families. I don’t have all the answers to all your questions. How about if we both wonder about this question together?”

What questions do you have about death?

A place for your special feeling art:

Family is Forever

“Are we still a family?” Adam asked his Daddy.

“Of course we are,” he replied. “Like I said, things will be different for us, Adam, but we are still a family. Mommy is still your Mommy and Jacob is still your baby brother. That is the beautiful thing about love, Adam. Love is stronger than death and family is forever.”

Pictures from my Heart

How to Help Yourself and Your Child

Keep a Journal

Encourage expression of your feelings



Exercise or join a class such as karate or gymnastics

Make and play with puppets

Talk to someone who helps

Remember your loved one

Do nice things for others in memory of your loved one
(The Kindness Project at www.misschildren.org)

Share photographs with your family

Cry if you feel like you need to

Try to take care of yourself

Read a lot of books

Re-read this journal every month and think about how far your child has come



Stay in touch with others you have met who help you

Join a family support group

Participate in rituals such as balloon releasing, tree or flower planting, scrapbooking, and anything else your family feels is helpful.

How Others Can Help a Child in Grief

A family member should inform the child and share information, not strangers

Consider the child's age and maturity level when talking to them



K.I.S.S. ~ Keep in Short & Simple. Avoid euphemisms.

Be honest and direct when answering questions

Allow the child to grieve. Listen and do not try to 'fix' them

Encourage the child to actively participate in and make decisions for any rituals.

Tell them they can write letters or draw pictures for their loved one. Offer to deliver it to the cemetery (or memorial service).

Allow them some private time when they need it, but check on them frequently. Listen to them. Do not speak, just listen and give them hugs.

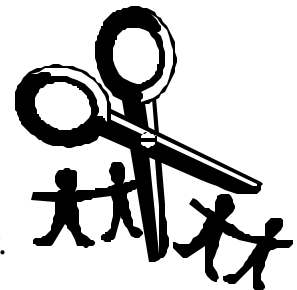
Read books together. Share memories. Spend a lot of quality time. Address and validate their feelings and assure them it was not their fault.

Participate in the Kindness Project together (www.misschildren.org)

Draw pictures together. Use play-doh or another age appropriate toy, music, art, exercise, dance, or anything else to help them express their grief.

Try not to be harsh in judging a child's minor behavior changes such as dropping grades in school. As long as they do not hurt themselves or others, it is probably temporary.

If possible, postpone major decisions or changes for at least one year.



Allow the child to keep a few mementos from their loved one.

Seek support and help for yourself or the grieving adult family members. It is overwhelming to try to help the child when the adults are not first helping themselves.

Note to adults: If your child experiences:

1. Extended periods of depression in which he or she loses interest in daily activities and events
2. Inability to sleep, loss of appetite, prolonged fear of being alone
3. Acting much younger for extended periods of time
4. Withdraws from friends at school
5. Sharp drop in performance or refusal to attend school

These are signs which may indicate that professional intervention may be needed. Please seek a therapist who specialized in child grief and trauma.

If you are a child experiencing these things, please let an adult know immediately.

This book made possible by grants from:

The Ronald McDonald House Charities
Luke Buse
Glendale Active 20-30 Club #131
Boeing ECF Mesa, Arizona

Thank you for helping us reach out to the children in need...

