



## **ANNOUNCING A DEATH IN PRESENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

This document was designed by Deuil-Jeunesse to equip parents who wish to announce the death of a loved one to their children.

It is a reference tool that allows us to create the right conditions for this difficult time. We know that it is not easy to make such an announcement, but doing so in the right way often makes it easier to support the young person in their grief process afterwards.



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## ANNOUNCING A DEATH IN PRESENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

### → **Make the announcement quickly.**

Providing young people with timely information prevents them from feeling the tension and emotions of the family members around them by not knowing what is going on and imagining all sorts of scenarios. It also helps prevent the young person from learning about it in undesirable ways (e.g., through social media or in the schoolyard, through a friend's cousin, etc.).

### → **Choose an appropriate location.**

### → **Ensure that the person making the announcement is meaningful to the young person.**

The place chosen must be a safe and calm place. The person making the announcement must be known to the young person and have a significant connection with them. This will allow young people to express their initial reactions without embarrassment and to receive physical comfort without feeling uncomfortable.

### → **Make the announcement to all young people in the family at the same time.**

It is important to avoid having one young person be the first and another be the last to hear the news of the death, as this can promote rivalry between siblings. Also, it's very difficult to make the same announcement multiple times. It's better to give everybody the same information at the same time.

### → **Address the subject directly, without detours.**

Detours will force the young person to guess what is going on, and will likely increase their anxiety about the situation.

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## → Check that the people present at the announcement are needed.

The announcement is an intimate moment that is long remembered. Young people do not like spectators any more than adults do. We recommend that only one or two adults be present.

## → Explain what death is.

It is possible to talk about the beliefs that comfort us, but we must first explain the basics to young people: death means the body stops functioning. The younger a child is, the more concrete additional details can be given to make things easier to understand: the person can no longer move, they can no longer eat, they can no longer see, etc.

⚠ Be careful not to use beliefs to make death more beautiful than life! This may sound healthy at first, but it can cause long-term damage.

E.g.: Avoid saying, "She's really better where she is now... She doesn't suffer anymore."

We want to avoid making death so beautiful that it becomes attractive and the young person thinks about dying to go and join the deceased.

## → Name the truth to the young person, regardless of the type of death.

Often attempts are made to protect the young person by hiding or altering the truth, but it is necessary to accept and trust that this death will be part of the young person's life history.

If you're not comfortable telling the truth right now, tell your youth that you're not ready to name certain things, but that you'll come back to the topic when you know how to talk about it. Call us and we will take the time to prepare you. This will help you avoid making things up or altering reality.

If we hide some of the truth, other people who know about it may tell the young person information in an inopportune time. It can be terrible to find out that others knew and that we were kept in the dark.

# L'ANNONCE D'UN DÉCÈS EN PRÉSENCE D'UN JEUNE

## → Use the S-C-D method.

### **S- Simplicity, C- Comprehension check, D- Details**

*"Dad had a serious accident this morning, and he died."* Simple words, good words, real words. You have to tell the young person as you would tell a friend, and this is true for both adults and toddlers. It's okay to cry when you make the announcement. Every parent is able to do it on their own, they just need to be reassured and guided, and that's why this tool exists.

Regardless of age, check understanding, welcome feedback, and provide clarification as needed.

## → Welcome and normalize all reactions.

All reactions are personal, unpredictable and normal. Young people's reactions are often different from those of adults. All reactions must be welcomed unconditionally. Lack of reaction is also a reaction.

## → Answer questions with calm, honesty and attention.

If you don't want to answer a question, it is better to be honest and say you don't want to answer than to lie. Lying is very risky because it jeopardizes the trust that is so important between the adult and the young person. This can have a disastrous effect on the young person's grieving process.

Questions must be answered quickly and with the right information, because young people will try to find their own answers on the Internet or in their imagination, which is also very risky.



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## Contact us

If you have any questions or would like more personalized assistance, please contact a Deuil-Jeunesse's specialist.

Deuil-Jeunesse is here to support you.

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