

A Complete Book About Death for Kids



By Earl Grollman and Joy Johnson

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For Parents, Family Members and Other Loving Grown-ups

For years we thought we were protecting children by not talking about death, by keeping them from funerals and not talking about the person who died. Now we know better. Children know when we're not telling the truth and when we're avoiding a difficult subject.

Children need our love and support when a death occurs.
They need to be told the truth in loving ways that are age appropriate.
They need to know they are not to blame for the death.
And they need information and answers to their questions.

This book is divided into three parts:

Death and Feelings
Funerals and Cemeteries
Cremation

We recommend you read the first part, then go to the section that fits your families decision about burial or cremation.

Of course, reading the whole book is fine, too, especially if the book inspires children's questions. Remember, you don't have all the answers. No one does. There are people willing to help you; your funeral director, spiritual leader, hospice personnel, grief educators and counselors. Learn together. Be active together. The family that loves together grieves together.

Children can take a simple part in decision-making, in the funeral itself and they can be an important part of the family. Because you care for children, you are an integral part of lifting the dark shroud of fear off death and letting the particles of sunshine in. Because you are reading this book, you are demonstrating that you have every intention of helping them grow through their grief and learn how to mourn in healthy ways. This is a significant experience for you and your children and we wish you well in your journey together.

Death and Feelings

This is your book about death and feelings.
It is also a book about life.

Everything that breathes and plays
and hops and jumps is alive.

Puppies and kittens and bunnies
and kangaroos are all alive.

Everything that flies
and grows
and has a voice
is alive.

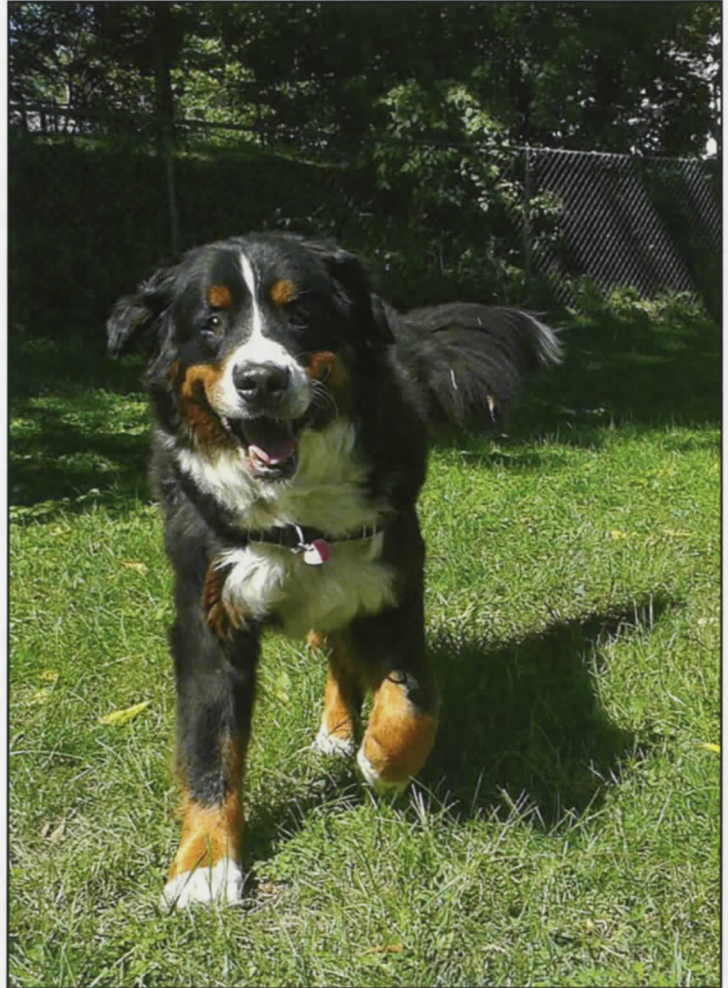
Birds and butterflies,
trees and flowers,
cows and elephants, are all alive.
And everyone who laughs and cries,
and giggles and dances is alive.

Just like animals, grasses and gardens;
people are alive.

Everything and everyone
who grows is alive.

Everything that is alive,
everyone who is alive,
lives and dies.

Living and dying—
that is just the way life is.



Just as we all
had a time when we were born,
we all have a time
when we will die.

Usually the time to die
comes when we are very old.
This is true for people
and animals
and other growing things.

There are many old, old dogs.

There are a lot of old, old cats.

Horses and camels
and all kinds of animals
can live a long, long time.

Everywhere we look we see huge,
ancient trees.

There are many old, old people, too.

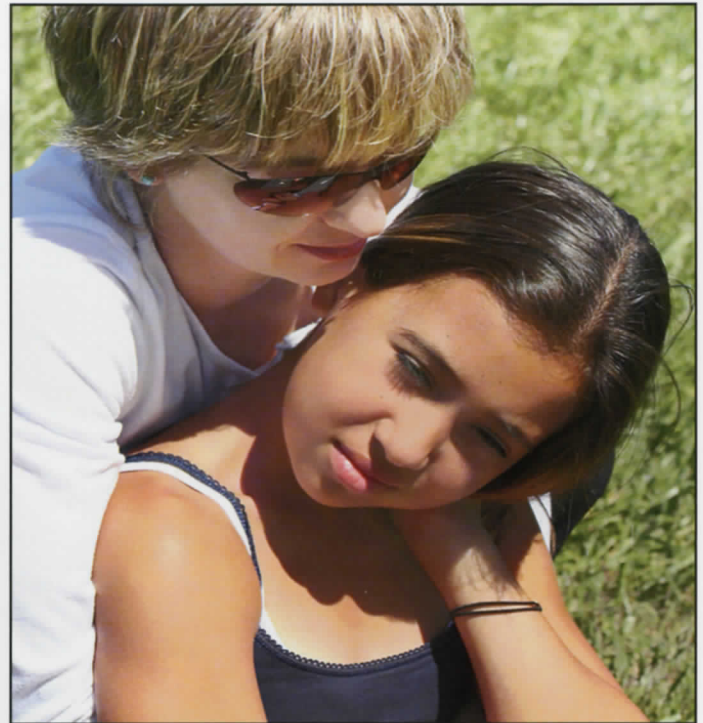
Usually, people live a long, long time.



Death and Feelings

Every so often, however, something happens that makes the dying time come sooner than we expect.

There may be an accident,
or a very serious illness,
and those animals
or plants
or people
die
before they become old.



When death happens to someone
or a pet we love
—whether the person or pet was young or old—
we have a lot of feelings.

Just as feeling happy is an important
part of living,
sadness is also an important part of living.

Grief is the sadness we feel when people or
pets whom we love die.

There are a lot of different kinds of sad.

Sometimes, something happens and you feel
a LITTLE BIT sad.

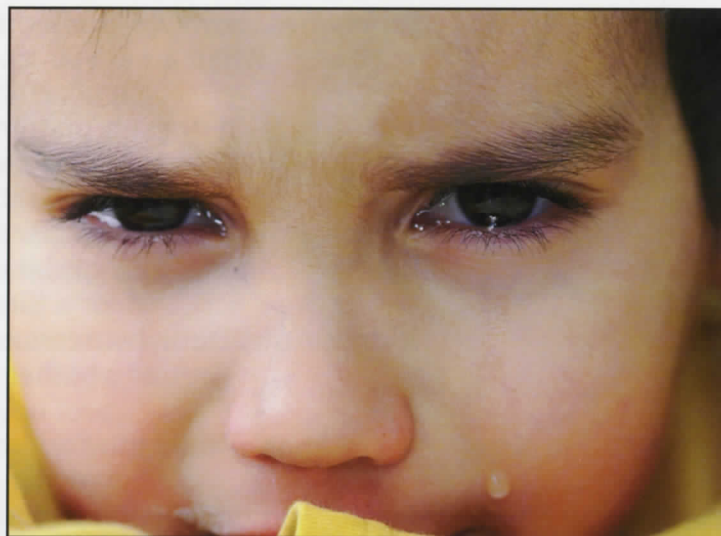
Maybe you lost a favorite toy.
Maybe someone was mean to you.
Maybe you wanted to go somewhere
and you couldn't go.

We call this a LITTLE BIT sad
because that kind of sad
doesn't last very long.

You will probably get other toys
or find the lost one.

The person who was mean to you
may be nicer to you the next day.

You will go to different places
and see other things.



Sometimes, however, something happens and you feel a BIG sad.
When a pet you love dies, that is a BIG sad.

It doesn't matter whether your pet was
a dog or a cat
or a rabbit or a fish.

It doesn't matter whether your pet was
a gerbil or a guinea pig
or a bird or a mouse.

It doesn't matter whether you had your pet for a long, long time
or whether it was a new pet.

You loved your pet
and you had a BIG sad.



When a person whom you love dies, you have

THE BIGGEST SAD EVER.

You may have many feelings.

Sometimes it feels as if all those feelings
are screaming inside you at the same time.

And especially when you are sad and have lots of feelings,
you may want to have lots of hugs
from people you love.

Other times you may want to play with your friends.

After someone dies, it's all right to laugh and play,
and it's especially all right to ask questions.

