



## GRIEF TALKING POINTS

Inspired by the widely popular Disney Frozen II, this tip sheet is designed to share suggestions on how to have open conversations with children about death and grief.

### General tips to keep in mind:

- When you think there is a teachable moment that can be made, consider your child's age and developmental understanding. Certain topics may not be appropriate for every child or warrant a conversation. Gauge their understanding by paying attention to their reactions and asking open-ended questions like "I wonder what you think happened?" or "I wonder why you think they are (insert feeling)?"
- Use simple, concrete terms when talking about death. Very young children struggle to understand euphemisms the way we do as adults. Use words like "dead", "died", and "dying". While these words may seem blunt, they help children begin to understand basic concepts around death/dying, are less confusing, and help normalize the conversation.
- Look for opportunities to discuss feelings and be open about your feelings, as well. Give feelings a name and discuss healthy ways to cope with feelings.

- Don't put too much pressure on the conversation. You know your child best. Follow their lead and answer their questions honestly. Don't worry about having all the answers to their questions. In fact, it is perfectly okay to admit you don't know the answer. If it's a question you can explore together, we'd suggest doing so! Remember, it's okay for us to struggle with questions and feelings. When we offer opportunities for kids to share with us, we send the message that they don't have to struggle alone.

### Frozen II talking points:

- Olaf talks about change and transformation a lot throughout the movie. When a death occurs, it can disrupt our lives and cause a lot of changes. Similarly, it can bring about transformation. Create space to talk about these changes by asking your child what changes have happened in their life since their person died. You can ask what kind of things they have control over right now—maybe changes they think you should make together as a family to better adjust/cope. You can also explore whether they can identify ways the death has changed who they are, and how they view the world and relationships with others.

- Like Elsa, Anna, Olaf, and Kristoff, who has been the most supportive of you since your person died? What has been helpful/unhelpful?
- Throughout the movie, Anna is worried about Elsa's safety. After a death, it is common for children to worry other people in their life dying. You could discuss why Anna is so worried and if they have similar worries since their person died. Talk about ways you can stay safe as a family and who in their life helps take care of them.
- After Elsa and Anna find their parent's ship, Elsa expresses the guilt she feels. Guilt is a common reaction to death and younger children especially may think that their thoughts, feelings, or actions caused someone to die. Oftentimes guilt goes unaddressed/ unsupported unless we allow for opportunities to talk about it. Questions like "I wonder why you think Elsa is sad?", "I wonder what you think the word guilty means?" or "I wonder if you have ever felt guilty about your brother's death?" can be helpful in starting the conversation. Conversations around guilt are not intended to take away

someone's guilt, but rather help the child process their guilt with a person they trust. Instead of telling them not to feel guilty, help them understand why the death is not their fault.

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We hope that this tip sheet provides you with the support you need to open up the conversation with your child about the feelings of grief they may be experiencing. Feel free to adapt these suggestions to fit the needs of your child.

If you need additional support, please contact Erin's House one of the following ways:

- **By phone:** 260.423.2466
- **By email:** Info@ErinsHouse.org
- **Online:** ErinsHouse.org



#### OUR MISSION

Erin's House provides support to children, teens, and their families who have experienced a death.

5670 YMCA Park Dr. W.  
Fort Wayne, IN 46835

260.423.2466

ErinsHouse.org

