

# TOP

Tips on parenting



## IN THIS ISSUE:

1

Talking With Young Children About Death

2

Think Math!

5

Beautiful Junk

6

Books Can Help Reduce Children's Stress



TOP is published & produced by:

The Emma Eccles Jones Center for Early Childhood Education at



## Talking With Young Children About Death

### *A Message From Mister Rogers*

Each of us has a different way of expressing our thoughts and feelings with our children—different words and actions that seem to suit us best. There are times, too, when we all feel inadequate. There are no easy answers, especially when it comes to talking about death. It can be difficult to know much about what our children are feeling, especially the younger ones who are not very verbal or the pensive ones who may not be so willing to share their troubles openly. And it is easy to misread children's often seemingly callous responses to a death in the family. *Each child in the family is different and will cope with grief in his or her own unique way.*

Sometimes in trying to anticipate our children's pain and sadness, we tend to want to protect them, even to the point of not wanting to tell them about a death in the family. "Jeffrey's only 2 1/2," one mother explained. "He really wouldn't understand what it's all about." Another mother felt that her daughter would be overwhelmed by the news of a grandparent's death, "Cheryl loved her grandmother so much. It would crush her to know that she died." Though the decision not to tell a child is understandable, we do have to ask whether it's really in the child's best interests.

Children's sensitivity to "vibes" is extremely keen. At a time of sadness in a family, there are so many facial cues, so many disrupted schedules, new people coming and going, lots of conversations to overhear, and a general aura that clearly states something important is going on. Even if a young child is sent off to stay with a friend or neighbor, chances are that he or she will know that this sudden visit is because something important has happened at home. Feelings of exclusion can be much harder for children than feelings of sadness. Not only does exclusion bring a sense of rejection but it can also result in children misinterpreting what is going on. Uncertainty can arouse anxiety. We need to remember that when there are unanswered questions (or even unspoken ones), children will find their own fantasy explanations. Often these fantasies are scarier than reality. For example, children, as they struggle to understand the finality of death, may worry that a dead person will need food and have no way to get it. One child who did not understand about burial decided that her grandfather's body had been placed in the attic, and that was why the attic was a forbidden place to play. It may well be, then, that one of the best kinds of "protection" we can give children is to provide them with simple and straightforward answers to their questions and ample opportunities to let us know what questions they have. *It is precisely because young children don't understand what death is all about that they especially need us to talk about it with them.*

“  
It is precisely because young children don't understand what death is all about that they especially need us to talk about it with them.  
”

Most children want to know what death is like. They may equate death with stillness, but may ask if you can see when you are dead, if you can get hungry, feel cold, make

continued on page 2...

## Talking With Young Children About Death, *continued...*

a “bm” or “pee-pee.” These questions may catch us off guard, but they are all parts of a natural curiosity about the physical aspects of death. “What position are you in when you die?” children have asked, or “If we sat Grandma up, what would happen?” It’s not unusual for a child to ask the same kinds of questions again and again before the answers become real to them. This can be especially true in a child’s attempt to understand the finality of death.

While what we do and how we do it is generally more significant than what we actually say when talking about death, there is one consideration that makes words themselves important: *Children tend to take what we say literally.* If, in an attempt to explain death, a parent has likened it to sleep, then it is not surprising that a child may assume that death is something from which you can awake. Or if, instead of using the word “died,” we say that someone has “gone to sleep forever,” a child may begin worrying that he or she may never wake up some morning. Our euphemisms can be troublesome for young children! What, for instance, or they supposed to understand when they hear someone has “lost” a father or a daughter? And there’s one example of children’s literalism I came across that really taught me the importance of trying to find out whether a child has correctly understood what we’ve said. In this instance, a family was trying to prepare their young son for a visit to the funeral home where the boy’s grandfather was awaiting burial. They explained that Grandpa’s body would be lying in an open coffin. The boy was very anxious—until he saw his grandfather in one piece. He had expected his grandfather’s head to be missing and only his *body* to be there.

Children’s literalness can also give them difficulties with the concept of Heaven. We need to be true to our individual beliefs and family traditions but at the same time remain sensitive to our children’s real concerns. Many of our words can be frightening or confusing. A child may wonder, “If Heaven is up there in the sky, why are they burying Aunt Millie in the ground?” Or “Will the rain bring Mommy down from the sky?” Or, “If I go up in an airplane, can I see my

baby sister?” The explanation that “Daddy is up in Heaven watching over you” is usually meant to be reassuring, but to a child it may raise the image of a spy who knows everything that you’re thinking and doing all the time. Similarly, “Your sister was so good, that God took her to live with Him” is usually meant to be a positive statement, but for a child it could cast doubts on the value of being good and the kindness of God in taking away someone we love. Sometimes we can be more helpful by answering a child’s questions with “No one knows for sure, but I believe...” For some people, saying “You know, I wonder about that too” is a special kind of honesty and a kind that their children can understand.

While Heaven is an important concept for some families, many of children’s concerns with death seem to be much more immediate and practical—and need to be dealt with on that level. For instance, death may be closely associated in a child’s mind with abandonment. A major worry for children may be who will look after them if one or both of their parents were to die. How would basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing be provided? In trying to reassure them, we can help them know that we hope

we’ll be living as long as they need us and that most people live for a long, long time. If children are asking for more than that, we can enumerate the many people who love them and who help look after them right now. They may even like to know that, in the event of our death, provisions have been made for their continuing care through a will and insurance. Not long ago, a child gave me insight into her concerns about this. It began when we were talking about a death in another family where there were young children. “If Mommy died, what if Daddy got someone to take care of us who I was scared to talk to?” I was able to assure her that because hers was the kind of family that really cared about talking, her Daddy would certainly find someone she’d be comfortable with. I asked her which babysitters and friends she liked to talk to and then told her these were just the kind of people her Daddy would look for. Talking about a death that is not close is one of the best chances we have to let our children articulate their fears. *That’s why talking about the death of a plant, a fish or a pet is such an important*

*continued ...*

## activity corner



### Think Math!

Mathematics is more than calculation (addition, subtraction, etc.). Mathematics involves thinking about relationships among objects and within time, while calculation involves using numbers to represent those relationships. Children need to become proficient at mathematical thinking—understanding relationships—before they can be competent with calculations. Following are some typical activities in which young children can participate that will help them develop as mathematical thinkers.

- As you take the socks out of the dryer or off of the clothes line, ask your child to match them in pairs.
- Make setting the table for a meal your child’s regular job. This provides him/her with the opportunity to think about how to be sure everyone has one plate, one fork, etc.
- As you wash the silverware or remove it from the dishwasher, ask your child to sort the knives, forks, etc., into the silverware drawer.
- Mark a special day on the calendar (your child’s birthday, for example) and invite your child to count the days until the special day. Help him/her note that as each day passes, the special day is one day closer.
- Toys such as Duplos, Legos, and blocks require mathematical thinking as constructions are created.

question corner

way to lay the groundwork for talking about a more painful death when it occurs.

Children's concerns do not always reach us through conversation. Sometimes they come less directly--through play. Play is serious business for children and the fundamental way for them to work on their feelings. One child might express anger over a loss by building elaborate block structures and then destroying them again and again and again. Another might play about death by burying dolls in sand or by just lying very, very still. For a child who plays with puppets, dramatic puppet play might be an outlet for a wide range of feelings; for others, it might be made-up songs ("Grandpa's buried in the ground, in the ground..."). We need to support this kind of play without interfering with it. Often our most appropriate role is that of the quiet observer, nearby and unobtrusive, available for conversation if the play leads naturally to talk.

Children mourn. They feel sadness just as we do, and we all need to express that sadness in some way that is natural for us. Crying is one way. Many adults are reluctant to cry in front of their children but if we try to hide our overwhelming sadness, children may wonder if we are really sad or not--and whether it's all right for them to be. If crying is not comfortable for us, then we need to find other ways to say "I am hurting" and "I loved Grandma, too."

Grieving together gives us the chance to offer each other comfort: "We both feel sad, don't we?" "Even though we loved her in different ways, we can share some of our pain." "You're not alone in how you feel." But there will be times, too, when we need to grieve alone in our own unique ways. For a child it may be by withdrawing or misbehaving or shouting. Nor should we be surprised to find children running out to play as usual. Most children find it hard to tolerate prolonged exposure to grieving, and that's an important reason for letting them know that sadness isn't forever and that little by little, the sadness will go away.

Children can feel angry at death--just as we can. "How could he do this me?" or "Didn't she know how much I needed her?" are feelings that children and adults alike can want to scream out loud. People of all ages need the freedom to shake their fists at the sky and shout "Why me?" "Why him?" Help for a child can often come from your helping him or her know that lots of people feel that way when someone close to them dies. It can often come, too, from providing physical outlets for the anger, such as strenuous gardening or hammering.

Children can also feel guilty. They may believe "If only I had behaved better, she wouldn't have died" or "I gave him the cold that started him getting sicker." At an early age, children



"I was tending my three-year old granddaughter when she sat down at the mirror and announced 'Aren't I cute!' I need some ideas on how to respond to this!"

~ Sally in Idaho

"Talking about a death that is not close is one of the best chances we have to let our children articulate their fears. That's why talking about the death of a plant, a fish or a pet is such an important way to lay the groundwork for talking about a more painful death when it occurs."

As the grandmother of a just-turned-seven-years "cutie," this scenario is one I have experienced! *All* three-year-olds are "cute," and *all* grandmothers are biased, so the immediate response of course is to say, "Yes, I think so." Nevertheless, don't leave it at that; continue the conversation by telling her what you think is the best thing about her. For example, you think she is very kind to her pet cat, her friends, or her baby brother; you love her happy laugh, the way she tells funny stories, shares her toys. Give her a list of the five best things about her, and then encourage her to think of the five best things about her parents, sibling, or you.

There are two purposes for this strategy. The first is to reinforce the idea that appearance is not as important as other characteristics, and to help her focus on desirable traits over which she has some control. We can never guarantee that the cute three year old will still be cute at the age of 13, 23, or 53! Indeed, you probably hope that she won't be! She needs your help in valuing other aspects of her individuality, especially those related to personality and character. The second purpose is to guide her to focus on other people and appreciate them. It is important for everyone to be able to discern admirable traits in other people, and recognize the worth of those on whom we bestow our love and friendship.

A final note about the word "cute," which we use so freely in our everyday speech. It was originally a contraction, or shortened form, of "acute" meaning "sharp" or "clever." You would never know that now from the way we use it to describe kittens, clothes, little children, birthday cards etc. If it still had its original meaning, I would be delighted to tell the world that my granddaughter is "cute," and I am sure you would be also! Given the present meaning, I think you are wise to carefully consider how to respond to your granddaughter's claims to "cuteness." ☺

~Dr. Renee Falconer, Assistant Professor of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Southern Mississippi

## Talking With Young Children About Death, *continued...*

do tend to think that their thoughts and wishes have magical powers--that wishing someone dead could

cause that person to die. Guilt can also come from specific regrets most of us have when a loved one dies, regrets for things we said or did...or for things we *didn't* say or do.

Children are no different, and we help each other when we talk about these feelings together. A teenager dealing with her mother's death confided to her social worker, "Did she know that I loved her?

What about the times I said 'I hate you'?" She needed to hear, as we all do, that we often express anger at people we love the most, that loving people understand that and forgive us. We need to be equally as forgiving of ourselves.

Adults and children alike can find comfort and even pleasure in memories. Some children may like to make a "memory book" with notes and pictures about the person who died. Time spent remembering with our children, times spent sharing the laughs and tears that such memories may bring, can be times of special closeness. And memories reaffirm for a child, and for us, that the people we loved go on living in our minds and that they will always be an important part of who we are now and who we grow up to be.

The process of grieving takes a long time. It's not unusual for a child to grieve over a pet for two or three months and to grieve over a person for a year. Holidays or special places or traditional events may reevoke old feelings and may lead to yet another round of questions, the same questions, and to still more discussion. These are times for reworking those feelings and for finding fuller understandings. Though the sadness, thankfully, ebbs, the process really continues all our lives.

Many of us have worried about whether our children should attend the funeral services of someone they loved.

Are they too young? Will it be traumatic for them? There really are no set answers, but I have come to believe that even a very young child can benefit significantly by sharing in at least some of the rituals that attend death if we have prepared them for what to expect and have been open to their questions.

Funerals provide a structure for the early days of grieving. They provide a time for the sharing of grief, and they bring a sense of closure and finality that, sooner or later, we all have to accept. Funerals are a

time for venting emotions and bringing relief, and I believe that children need that relief, too. Letting our children view an open casket may be a particular source of worry for us, but even here, it can turn out that the reality of a dead body is less frightening than a child's fantasies about it. Children may startle us by wanting to see "what dead looks like." They might even ask "What's under the blanket where Grandpap's feet are? What makes it so puffy there?" They might want to know what is inside the hearse. Many funeral directors have become accustomed to children's need to know and can provide helpful answers to such questions.

Though parents are the best judges of how their children participate in a funeral, we all need to consider whether at least some participation in the rituals may not be healthy for them. I know of a five-year-old

boy who had not been allowed to participate in his grandfather's funeral when he was three years old. Ever since, whenever this boy hears an announcement of a funeral at church, he begs his mother to take him--to *anyone's* funeral. Another young boy had been excluded from his family's weddings and funerals, and expressed to his first grade teacher that he had two wishes--"To go to a funeral and to go to a wedding." He clearly felt a real need to see what went on at these two important milestones in life.

The decisions aren't always easy, and in addition to considering what may be best for our children, we need to stay responsive to what is best for us. When we are under the stress of bereavement, we may feel overtaxed by the constant need to cope with our young children's questions and fears and upsets, not to mention the demands of our daily routines.

So, there are no magic "right" words to say. It's the trying, the sharing, and the caring--the wanting to help and the willingness to listen--that says "I care about you." When we know that we do care about each other, then, together, we can talk about even the most difficult things and cope with even the most difficult times. ☺

~ © 1979 Family Communications, Inc.  
Reprinted with permission of publisher.  
For additional information about Mister Rogers and Family Communications, log onto [www.fci.org](http://www.fci.org).

“Adults and children alike can find comfort and even pleasure in memories. Memories reaffirm for a child, and for us, that the people we loved go on living in our minds and that they will always be an important part of who we are now and who we grow up to be.”

## Give TOP as a Gift!

TOP: Tips on Parenting newsletter Subscription Gift Certificates are now available for purchase! To obtain a gift certificate, you please call (435) 797-8629 or send e-mail to [eejcenter@coe.usu.edu](mailto:eejcenter@coe.usu.edu). You may also download a gift certificate in Adobe PDF format from our website at <http://www.coe.usu.edu/ecc/top>. TOP Gift Certificates make great baby shower, birthday, and thank you gifts. An annual subscription to TOP (for yourself or for a gift) is only \$3.00 per year. ☺



## activity corner

### Beautiful Junk

**SPECIAL FULL-PAGE EDITION TO  
COMBAT THOSE SUMMERTIME  
BOREDOM BLUES!**



Here are some fun ideas of things to make and do with your children, using “beautiful junk” and other things you have around the house. Not only are these activities lots of fun, but they are also learning experiences for your children. Somebody once said, “Necessity is the mother of invention.” Use necessity as your guide and keep your eyes and ears open to the endless list of “beautiful junk!”

#### LAUNDRY BASKET TOSS

Children can toss rolled up socks or other soft objects into a laundry basket. For older children, lines can be made (imaginary lines, tape on the floor) for them to toss behind.

*What Children Will Learn:*

- Children will increase their large motor skills (arm and leg muscles) and hand-eye coordination.
- Older children can measure the distance between the basket and themselves. They can also count how many socks they have thrown.

#### EXPLORATION BOTTLES

Fill plastic bottles (water, pop, juice) with different materials. For exploration of liquids, fill with water and yarn, water with dish soap, colored water with oil, or corn syrup. Bottles may also be filled with dry ingredients such as flour or salt or beans or rice. Safety Note: Make sure lids are taped (or secure) so that children cannot take the lids off.

*What Children Will Learn:*

- Children can move and shake the bottles to learn about the materials and whether they move quickly or slowly.
- Language will be learned as the children describe colors and movements of the materials and hear adults use descriptive words.

#### WATER PLAY

A great time for playing with water is during bath time. Add some liquid soap for some fun, and children can make bubbles using wire whisks. Other fun toys to make and play with are empty plastic containers to pour water from one to the other, berry baskets, ladles, sponges, and strainers. You can also add shaving cream (easy to clean up!). Or, try poking holes of different sizes in the bottom and sides of a milk jug, and fill it with water.

*What Children Will Learn:*

- Children learn about how water, bubbles, or shaving cream feel.
- Children can learn quantities such as less, more, full, and empty as they pour water from one container to the other.
- Children learn how fast water comes out of different size holes.

#### BOX PUZZLES

Cut empty boxes (cereal or other food boxes) into pieces for the children to put back together. For younger children, the boxes can be cut into two or three pieces. For older children, cut into more pieces. For other puzzles, magazines or children’s drawings can be glued to the boxes and then cut out.

*What Children Will Learn:*

- Children can identify shapes, colors, and letters.
- Children will develop a sense of pride as they finish a puzzle.

#### BOX BLOCKS

Gather an assortment of different sized boxes that are small enough for children to build with. Children can also build with yogurt or sour cream containers. NOTE: Make sure all boxes and containers are empty and clean.

*What Children Will Learn*

- Children will strengthen their arm and hand muscles.
- Children will learn how tall they can stack the blocks and how to make the boxes balance.

#### MAKING MUSIC

There are many ways to make music:

- Bang on pots with wooden spoons.
- Fill yogurt or sour cream containers with beans or rice to make shakers. NOTE: Seal the lids with tape.
- Put 3 or 4 rubber bands around an empty tissue box to play as a guitar.
- Using a rubber band, attach a square piece of wax paper on one end of an empty toilet paper tube for children to blow through.
- Make drums from empty plastic containers with lids (sour cream, cottage cheese).

*What Children Will Learn:*

- Children can describe the different sounds they hear.
- Children can enjoy the music as they make it themselves.

#### LID SORTING AND COUNTING

Gather colored lids from milk jugs, frozen juice can lids, or other lids with smooth edges. For other children, numbers or letters can be written on the lids. Children can sort lids according to color or type. Older children can make words from the letters written on the lids. Lids can be stored in baby wipe containers.

*What Children Will Learn:*

- Children will learn how to count and sort.
- Children can learn numbers, letters, and colors.
- Reading is encouraged as letters are formed into words.

#### HIDE AND SEEK

Place objects under a blanket for infants and toddlers to find. Hide objects in a cube-type empty tissue container. Hide objects around the room or house for children to find, and tell children when they are getting close. Older children can draw maps to show where objects are hidden.

*What Children Will Learn:*

- Younger children will use memory skills to remember where the objects are hidden.
- Older children will learn about directions (near, far, high, low).

## Books Can Help Reduce Children's Stress

by Dr. Martha T. Dever

It is normal for young children to be anxious, angry, or fearful at times. If your child's behavior is not severe, it is probably a typical response to a stressful situation. For example, while the birth of a sibling is exciting, it is also difficult for young children to share the attention of their parents and adjust to the change a new baby brings. Other situations that create normal stress for children include the death of a pet, divorce, the first day of school, and fear of the dark. Many children's books address these themes and provide a vehicle for children who are experiencing normal anxiety to talk about things that are bothering them.

The content of stories teaches children many things about the world in which they live. Stories in which the characters have experiences similar to those of young children enable them to identify with the characters in the stories. They learn they are not alone in their feelings if the stories focus on typical stressful situations they may be experiencing. Reading and discussing the stories invites children to talk about troubling things and may help reduce stress.

Many authors have written books that depict stressful situations common in the lives of young children. As you read, invite your

child to make personal connections to the story or with the characters. Begin your discussion of the book by asking your child to talk about his/her favorite part of the story. You might like to re-read that part of the story and talk about why it is his/her favorite part.

Continue guiding your discussion of the book by asking questions like: "Has anything like this ever happened to you?" or, "Have you ever felt like \_\_\_\_\_ felt in the story?" Be sure to be accepting, not angry, if your child expresses negative feelings. Then, reassure your child that he/she is safe.

Following are some books that you may wish to read with your child:

### There's Something in My Attic

by M. Mayer (Dial Books)

Many young children are afraid of the dark. When the young girl in this story goes to bed at night, her parents turn the lights out, and that scares her. She hears a NIGHTMARE in the attic but, of course, her parents don't hear anything.

continued ...

## question corner



"Our daughter has olive skin and beautiful long, dark hair and some girls in her kindergarten class are telling her she isn't pretty. This has really hurt her feelings. What is the best way to handle this problem?"

~John in Oregon

It is disturbing that girls this young would start judging one another and themselves on the basis of appearance. The sad reality is that in today's culture the importance of being beautiful (typically using EuroAmerican standards) is evident at every turn. Girls see an enormous number of advertisements selling beauty products and aids. Barbie Doll and other fashion dolls are everywhere and are all about being pretty and dressing right. And, Disney movies such as *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Pocohontas* show girls that beauty is important. It is hard to counter these messages.

The most immediate response to the above problem might be to talk to your child about how unfair it is for people to judge others on how they look. If your child is beautiful or not is really irrelevant. Whether it is hair, skin color, or body shape, it is not okay to devalue, exclude, or tease someone because of how they look. While young children don't totally understand the message, begin teaching them that beauty is what's inside a person. Being responsible, trustworthy, courteous, hard-working, and caring are far more important qualities.

As a parent, you may also want to consider any messages you may be giving your daughter about beauty. Do you emphasize that being pretty is important? Many young girls who are reinforced frequently for looking pretty learn that their appearance is critical to gaining acceptance and praise from others. Basing one's identity on beauty will not lead to the kind of strong self-esteem that will serve her well throughout her life. So, encourage your daughter to be a beautiful person inside where it counts. Next time someone tells her she isn't pretty, encourage her to say (or think) "Who cares!" You may also want to share this situation with your child's teacher so that he or she can reinforce this message.

~Dr. Deborah Byrnes, Professor of Elementary Education at Utah State University

You and your child will enjoy the way she conquers the NIGHTMARE in the attic.

**Will I Have a Friend?**

by M. Cohen (Aladdin Paperbacks)

School is a new experience and most children feel some anxiety when the first day arrives. As this story begins, Jim wonders if he will find a friend at school. When his father leaves him at school, he doesn't want to say good-bye. The narrative unfolds depicting a typical day in kindergarten; all the time, Jim is wondering where his friend is. As is the case with most children, Jim does find a friend.

**Charlie Anderson**

by B. Abercrombie (M.K. McElderry Books)

Adjusting to life after their parents' divorce is difficult for young children. In this story, Sarah and Elizabeth live with their mother and a delightful cat named Charlie. Each night, Charlie gets brushed and fed and then sleeps in Elizabeth's bed. In the morning, he disappears only to return each night. Elizabeth and Sarah would like to take Charlie with them on the weekends when they visit their father. One night, Charlie doesn't come home to be fed and brushed and sleep on Elizabeth's bed. The girls worry, hoping he isn't cold or hurt. In the morning, they set out to look for Charlie, hunting everywhere and going door to door asking people if they have seen him. As the story unfolds, we discover that Charlie has two homes, just like Sarah and Elizabeth.

**Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day**

by J. Viorst (Aladdin Books)

We all have bad days—days we wish we hadn't gotten out of bed! We can help children learn that bad days happen and can be taken in stride. In this story, Alexander wakes up with gum in his hair and thus begins his unpleasant day. Things only get worse as his mother forgets to put dessert in his lunch, the dentist tells him he has a cavity, the elevator door shuts on his foot and so it goes!

**Darcy and Gran Don't Like Babies**

by J. Cutler (Scholastic Inc.)

Sharing parents' time and attention and adjusting to the changes a new sibling brings to a family can be difficult for young children.

As this story begins, Darcy has a new baby brother and she doesn't like him! One day, Gran comes to visit and Darcy tells her that she doesn't like the new baby. Gran responds with, "me neither." Gran shares the things she doesn't like about the baby which just happen to be the same things Darcy doesn't like. When Darcy and Gran set off to have fun in the park, Darcy notices that there are several babies in the park and continues to grumble. As Darcy and Gran spend a lot of time talking and playing together, Gran helps Darcy learn to love the new baby.

**More Than Anything Else**

by M. Bradby (Orchard Books)

Often, children get discouraged as they try to master a task or new skill. While we must be reasonable with our expectations of our children, sometimes determination is the missing ingredient as children learn something new. This book is a chronicle of young Booker T. Washington who wants to learn to read. As an African-American in 1865, Booker doesn't have the opportunity to go to school, but through sheer determination, he does learn to read.

**Big Sister, Little Sister**

by C. Zolotow (Harper Trophy)

As much as they love and care about each other, typical siblings argue and become angry. This is the story of a big sister who enjoys taking care of her little sister. One day, tired of being told what to do by big sister, little sister hides. Big sister is frightened when she can't find her little sister. In the end, the sisters realize that in various ways, they each take care of the other.

**Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children**

by B. Mellonie and R. Ingpen (Bantam Books)

It is common for children to

experience the death of a pet or grandparent. Death is particularly difficult for young children because they do not understand why it has happened. This beautifully illustrated book talks about how all living things, plants and animals, have a lifetime that ends with death.

“The content of stories teaches children many things about the world in which they live. Stories in which the characters have experiences similar to those of young children enable them to identify with the characters in the stories. They learn they are not alone in their feelings...”

**Amazing Grace**

by Mary Hoffman (Dial Books)

Sometimes children say cruel things to others, creating hurt feelings for the child on the receiving end of the unkind words. In this story, Grace has decided that she wants to play the part of Peter Pan in the upcoming school play. One classmate tells her she can't because Peter Pan is a boy and another tells her she can't because Peter Pan isn't black like she is. Grace has a loving mother and grandmother who encourage her to meet her goal in spite of what others might say.

In general, children ages 3 to 7 will enjoy these books which can be easily located in your school library, community library, or local bookstore. Staff at the library or bookstore can assist you in finding additional books on these or other topics of interest to you. Try them and, ENJOY READING AND TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD.



~Dr. Martha T. Dever is a mother, former kindergarten teacher, and an associate professor of Early Childhood Education at Utah State University. She also serves as Interim Director of the Emma Eccles Jones Center for Early Childhood Education at Utah State University.



**TOP:** tips on parenting

is published quarterly by the Emma Eccles Jones Center for Early Childhood Education at Utah State University.

Editor: DR. MARTHA T. DEVER  
(435) 797-0394 • [dever@coe.usu.edu](mailto:dever@coe.usu.edu)

Managing Editor: ESTELLE RITCHIE  
(435) 797-8629 • [eejcenter@coe.usu.edu](mailto:eejcenter@coe.usu.edu)

**TOP** Article Review Panel:

- JIM BARTA ..... Utah State University
- DEBORAH BYRNES ..... Utah State University
- BILLIE ENZ ..... Arizona State University
- RENEE FALCONER ..... Univ. of Southern Mississippi
- THOMAS LEE ..... Utah State University
- CAROL STRONG ..... Utah State University

Inquiries regarding submissions should be directed to Martha Dever. All other questions, suggestions, or comments should be directed to Estelle Ritchie. **TOP** is also available in Spanish and on our web site at: [www.coe.usu.edu/ecc/top](http://www.coe.usu.edu/ecc/top).

Postmaster: Please send address changes to EEJCECE, Utah State U., 2885 Old Main Hill, Logan UT 84322-2885.

Items in this publication are copyrighted and may not be published or reproduced in any form without the consent of **TOP**'s Editor.

Copyright ©2000 by the Emma Eccles Jones Center for Early Childhood Education. All rights reserved.

Thanks for reading **TOP**!

**TOP**  
tips on parenting

**I'd like to subscribe to **TOP**!**

For a one-year subscription to **TOP**, fill out the following information and send \$3.00 (the cost of printing and distribution) to:

EEJ Center for Early Childhood Education  
Utah State University  
2885 Old Main Hill  
Logan UT 84322-2885

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY STATE ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT **TOP**?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_