SHARING WITH YOUR CHILD AFTER A LOSS

Whether you are navigating the first conversation or checking-in with your child to share about a death or loss, here are some reminders to support your connection and conversation

Check in with your own feelings and needs around the death or loss. Take a moment to acknowledge how this loss impacts you

What am I grieving in this loss? What am I feeling and where am I feeling it in my body? What do I need in this moment before and during the conversation with my child? This might look like talking with someone who can support you, a walk, meditation, prayer, or emotional outlet prior

Pick a neutral space that is private. Avoid sharing where they eat or sleep.
The living room or patio in the backyard

If a child has an adult they feel supported and safe with, allow them to be there for additional support

This might look like an older family member or friend that is strongly connected with your child. Share with them what you plan to say and how you would like them to support (i.e. sharing information or emotional support).

Give the children honest age-appropriate information. Using "dead" and "died" is okay, and helps them process. Euphemisms like "sleeping" or "passed" are confusing for children. Share in bite-sized chunk that allows for questions and feelings
"Your grandmother died this morning. Died is when a body stops working. The body does not talk, eat, or feel anymore.... I'm wondering if you have any questions about what we shared about Grandma." (Defining "dead" looks different based on age

Model your feelings by sharing

"I am feeling sad. I cried when I found out and its okay to let out your feelings."

Allow time for the child to play afterwards and play with them. Let them lead and give options. Children grieve through play

"I wonder what you would like to do now? Do you feel like coloring or playing a game outside?"