Talking About Death and Difficult Subjects Play Activities

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Children love to watch the evolution of life in their daily play. They witness the growth, life, and death weeds, plants, flowers, trees, insects, animals, pets, and family members. They hear family members talk about sickness, the old age decline of family members, and eventual deaths of older relatives. Television, movies, and video games can overwhelm children with messages about death and dying. Listed below are a few thought provoking activities that you can share with your children in memory of a loved pet or family member.

Play Activities Materials:

A story or age appropriate book on death and dying



Journaling with art supplies
A plant or tree to plant in the garden with gardening soil and garden tools
Large rocks and paint
Scrapbook and pictures of happy times with a deceased pet or family member
Puzzles or games that were shared with a deceased family member

Play Activities:

After reading a story about death ask relevant questions about the story while playing with your children.
Illustrate the story that you have read in your journal. Write a story about the death of a loved pet or family member.
Children can draw delightful pictures of fun times with a deceased pet or family member and create a series of stories with illustrations.
If the child is young, they can draw pictures of stories that are transcribed by the parent.
Brainstorm how you would want to remember a relative by going to a special place or planting

a tree, plant, or flowers in memory of this person.

Go to a nursery and select a tree, plant of flower that best commemorates happy memories of a pet or person.

It may be relevant to a favorite fragrance, color, or type of tree, plant, or flower.

It may represent a favorite memory of this pet or person (i.e. where a dog would hide a bone, where a cat loved to sleep outside in the sun, where a child would read a book with a relative under a particular type of tree).

It can represent a special outing or trip with that animal or family member.

After planting the tree, plant, or flower, paint a large rock with a decoration and dedication to the loved pet or family member. The child may want to decorate the rock and older children may write the date of death or other memorable information about the loved one.

Create a scrapbook with your child of happy times share with the pet or family member. Over time, you and your child can revisit the photo album and discuss these happy memories as the child becomes older, the memories are different and far more thought provoking.

Select a game or puzzle that brings back memories of the loved one. If a pet, you can purchase of puzzle of similar dogs or places your child liked to play with the dog. For a family member, select puzzles that represent happy memories. Selected games that you can play may include the types of activities your child may have played with the relative. It may have

been a card game or a match game or even a preschool board game.

Relevant Common Core Standards

Listed below are California Common Core Standards in Mathematics relevant to some of these activities:

Kindergarten Geometry: Model shapes in the world by building shapes from components (e.g. sticks and clay balls) and drawing shapes.
First Grade Geometry: Distinguish defining attributes (e.g. triangles are closed and three sided) verses non-defining attributes (e.g. color, orientation, overall size; build and draw shapes to possess defining attributes.
Second Grade Geometry: Reason with shapes and attributes. Recognize and draw shapes having specified attributes, such as a given number of angles or a given number of equal faces. Identify triangles, quadrilaterals, pentagons, hexagons, and cubes.

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