

California State University, San Bernardino

**CSUSB ScholarWorks**

---

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

---

1981

## Talking to children about death

Rita Cohn

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project>



Part of the [Child Psychology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Cohn, Rita, "Talking to children about death" (1981). *Theses Digitization Project*. 4423.  
<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/4423>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@csusb.edu](mailto:scholarworks@csusb.edu).

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT DEATH

---

A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State College  
San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Psychology

---

by  
Rita Cohn  
August 1981

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT DEATH

---

A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State College  
San Bernardino

---

by  
Rita Cohn  
August 1981

Approved by:

[Redacted Signature]

Chairman

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Signature]

6/12/81

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	v
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Review of the Literature . . . . .	1
Need for Societal Change . . . . .	9
Present Educational Publications . . . . .	10
Further Parent Education . . . . .	12
Overview . . . . .	13
METHOD . . . . .	15
Development of the Pamphlet . . . . .	15
Description of the Pamphlet . . . . .	15
Evaluation of the Pamphlet . . . . .	16
Subjects . . . . .	17
RESULTS . . . . .	18
CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	25
... . . . .	
APPENDIX	
A. TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT DEATH . . . . .	29
B. QUESTIONNAIRE ON "TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT DEATH" . . . . .	36
REFERENCES . . . . .	38

## LIST OF TABLES

Frequency and Means of Responses to Questionnaire Items . . . . .	23
----------------------------------------------------------------------	----

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my thanks to Les Herold, my committee chairman, for his guidance, encouragement, and especially his interminable patience in helping me bring this project to fruition. I'd like to also thank John Hatton and Gloria Cowan for their invaluable help and patience as my committee members.

Special thanks go to Hillel, Lani, and Marc, my wonderful family without whose inspiration and support this project would never have been completed.

The cooperation of Claire Cherry, Director of Congregation Emanu-El Nursery School/Primary Learning Center in distributing the pamphlet and questionnaire to parents is gratefully acknowledged.

## INTRODUCTION

### Review of the Literature

British anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer (1965) called the subject of death, "the new pornography." Gorer observed that whereas sex was the taboo subject a few generations ago, today death has superseded sex as the ultimate taboo subject in our society. Wahl also compared the present attitudes to death with earlier attitudes to sexuality especially vis-a-vis parents and children.

Clinical experience abundantly proves that children have insatiable curiosity not only about 'where people come from' but also 'where people go to.' In his efforts to find an answer to this conundrum he is met today, as his questions about sexuality would have been met in the 1890's with evasion and subterfuge. (1958, p. 221)

While death formerly was a part of day to day experience for both adults and children, changes in living patterns as well as advances in modern medicine have significantly reduced direct experience with death, especially for the child. As Jackson (1965) pointed out, in previous generations grandparents were often an integral part of an extended family, not segregated in retirement homes or communities. When death came to them, it was more likely to be at home in the midst of their family rather than in a hospital or nursing home. Children were further exposed to the realities of death since the loss of a sibling, playmate,

or young parent was not an uncommon experience before modern medicine made youthful death a rarity.

While the experience of death was never considered pleasant, it was not remote and could be dealt with realistically. Death was met directly and openly with little pretense or illusion. Today most children are exposed to death only through the unreal aspect of television. Through television they experience death devoid of real emotion and concern (Gorer 1965).

There does appear to be an awakening interest in the subject of death in recent years. Due in good part to the popular writings of Dr. Kubler-Ross, college courses are offered, scientific and popular articles are written, and the treatment and rights of the dying are discussed. It would appear that society's attitudes to death are changing, but Furman (1974) cautions that the topic of death is still as obscured by defensive reactions as it was previously.

Furman (1974) further cautioned that in one area our denial of death and grief is particularly strong, namely in the relationship to our children. For example, Becker and Margolin (1967) worked for several years with seven surviving parents and their children after the death of the other parent. Although six parents had informed their older children of the other parent's death within twenty-four hours, the younger children were not told for days or months. Six parents explained that the deceased had "gone to heaven,"



although three of them did not believe in heaven. None of these children attended their parent's funeral and some were not told of burial until two years later. According to Becker and Margolin, the taboo in society concerning death results in a general disability in coping with grief and loss.

Gorer (1965), in a survey of bereaved families, found that 41 percent of the parents had not told their children under sixteen anything about the death; half of the others told their children beliefs that they themselves did not subscribe to; the others told their children something consistent with their own beliefs, but rarely the concrete facts of death.

Grollman (1967) pointed out that parents, because the subject of death makes them uncomfortable and because of their belief that they must have all the "correct" answers before dealing with their children's questions, have abdicated their responsibility for this phase of their children's education. Additionally, Grollman reported that parents have placed unusually high demands on themselves to spare their children painful experiences. The prevailing attitude seems to be that it is difficult enough for adults to deal with death; children should be protected from the knowledge of death for as long as possible. However, Anthony (1972) did not find any evidence that young children are particularly distressed in their early encounters with

death. The reaction of parents to these early encounters with death is probably a child's first suggestion that death is anxiety-provoking.

As stated by one commentator;

Instead of transmitting information and the capacity to cope with crisis in competence, adults tend to pass on mainly their anxiety and other negative attitudes about death. This means that the open and honest inquiry so natural with children is doubly thwarted, for in response to their questions they get only denial of information but also the hazard of anxiety which tends to be cumulative with the years. (Jackson 1965, p. 172)

Jackson further pointed out that parents ignore the fact that children do not live in a world censored by parents, and that without parental involvement children will ultimately learn of death without the necessary emotional support. This eventuality is, according to Jackson, unfortunate since parents are (especially before the child attends school) the major educational resource for guiding emotional development.

According to Kastenbaum (1967), parents have a superb opportunity to foster development that will effect emotional health throughout an entire life-span, by respecting and guiding children's efforts to puzzle out the meaning of death. Furman (1974) emphasized the importance of imparting information on death to children before they actually experience the death of a loved one. She stated that children's ability to comprehend the loss of someone close was considerably easier for those who already had a realistic concept of

death. Furman stressed that concrete factual knowledge of death was an important aspect of coping successfully with bereavement.

Some developmental psychologists would support parents who choose to ignore the subject of death with their children. Piaget (1954), for example, concluded that the high-level mental processes necessary to fully realize the finality and inevitability of death are not developed until adolescence; for this reason death cannot be truly understood until adolescence. However, Kastenbaum and Alsenberg (1972) stressed that although some developmental psychologists tend to emphasize a child's inability to understand death because of conceptual immaturity, an important corollary is that the child strives to understand death and that this can be his or her first vital intellectual challenge and an important stimulus to further mental development. Young children may not be capable of understanding philosophical abstractions but, according to Bruner (1966) any subject can be explained effectively in an intellectually honest form to children at any stage of development, although that explanation may use symbolic imagery rather than intellectual reasoning.

Maurer (1961), although received skeptically by some researchers, argued that concepts related to death (or at least the preliminary concept of non-being essential to the understanding of death) are involved in an infant's early

behaviors. According to Maurer, "peek-a-boo" is derived from Old English meaning "alive-or-dead," and this game, as well as other infant games (such as making a toy disappear by throwing it from a high chair), are actually experiments in being and non-being. These concepts of being and non-being prepare the child to understand death.

Maurer's fanciful explanation of infant games aside, most observers argue that children under the age of two probably have no concrete concept of death. Furman (1974) observed that beyond two years of age, a child is capable of acquiring a basic understanding of "dead" when guided by a sensitive adult who takes advantage of common encounters with dead flowers, insects, and animals that are available to two year olds.

Researchers have shown that children do think about death and do understand death-related concepts depending on their stage of development. Anthony's (1974) study in England demonstrated that death is a common topic in the thoughts of children and readily appears in their fantasies. Anthony found that a child's first discovery of death is not generally accompanied by strong emotion and that between the ages of seven and eight every child gave a response indicating comprehension of the word "dead."

Nagy (1959) reported in a well-known study of children's concepts of death that children tend to pass through different phases of development in the conceptualization of death.

During the first two years of life there appears to be no understanding of death. Between the ages of three and five, children tend to deny death as a regular and final process. They see those who have died as being in a state much like sleep, or on a journey from which they are expected to return to life. Children of five and beyond appeared to be accommodating themselves to the idea that death is final, inevitable, universal, and personal. At this stage death is interpreted in anthropomorphic terms and is seen as a human, animal, or divine figure that can carry one away. Nagy's final stage is achieved when a child realizes that death is inevitable for all, including oneself. This stage is achieved at about the age of nine or ten.

Some researchers have questioned the universal application of Nagy's findings with postwar Hungarian children to children of other cultures. According to McIntire, Angle, and Struempler (1972) American children tend to be less interested in fantasy than were Nagy's Hungarian children and more concerned with "organic decomposition" as early as age three. American children between the ages of five and nine rarely personify death as did the children of Nagy's study.

Rochlin (1967) conducted "play" sessions with normal three to five year olds in order to further understand their interpretations of death. His data confirmed much of Nagy's conclusions. In addition, Rochlin found that at an early age

well-developed defense mechanisms are working against the realization that life may end. Although Rochlin did not claim that children have adult conceptions of death, he argued that children understand enough to organize their thoughts and feelings against the threat of death.

In further studies Alexander and Alderstein (1959) demonstrated that children as young as five year olds show a more emotional reaction to death-related words than to other words, as measured by changes to skin resistance (galvanic skin responses). Hall and Scott (1922) obtained responses from adults to questionnaires concerning their earliest experiences with death. Responses showed that experiences related to death from as far back as the age of two registered with children and were remembered into adulthood.

Although controlled experimental methods have not generally been employed in these investigations, and there remains disagreement among researchers as to the effects of cultural differences, still it seems certain that young children do think about death, have concepts of death, and likely have questions about death.

Observers have noted that most adults speak and act as though children are oblivious to death. Parents may suppress open communication on the subject of death to protect their children or to protect themselves from the reality that they cannot face. In either case, Kubler-Ross (1975) has pointed

out that parents who think that they protect their children from harm by sheltering them from the facts of death actually do their children a disservice by depriving them of the opportunity to communicate and share their feelings and emotions with their parents on this subject. This disservice can have far-reaching effects for their mental health throughout the children's lives.

### Need for Societal Change

As stated previously, American society regards death as a taboo subject. Death is surrounded by euphemistic language and customs that deny death's reality. When one dies, after being embalmed and made lifelike with make-up, he or she rests peacefully in the slumber room of the mortuary. He or she did not die but instead passed away. Subsequently one is laid to rest in a memorial park, not buried in a cemetery, where the freshly dug earth has its truth carefully concealed by artificial grass. Survivors are then left to struggle with their adjustment to the unfortunate accident of death while they continue to deny their own mortality.

Although children have as natural a curiosity about death as they do about other aspects of their world, they soon learn from their parents' silence and avoidance that death is not a subject that can be talked about. The sense that death makes parents uncomfortable and anxious often results in childhood fantasies that are more disturbing

than the true facts of death. Children's concerns are not addressed and the taboo is perpetuated from one generation to the next. As previously pointed out by researchers Becker and Margolin (1967), the taboo in our society concerning death results in a general inability to cope with grief and loss.

Although many parents have chosen to keep the realities of death from their children in an effort to protect them, in truth this tact is more likely to cause disturbance. According to Grollman (1967), better mental health is achieved not from avoidance of death or denial of its existence but from acknowledgement and acceptance of it.

Since parents are the major resource for education and major guide for emotional development in young children, it would appear that an effort to promote better mental health for our society regarding attitudes toward death should start with educating parents. An effort to heighten parental awareness of the problem, and to encourage scrutiny of their own attitudes and anxieties in hopes of some resolution, might be a first step toward societal change. Further educational tools could then be developed for parents as guides to a sensitive and healthy approach on the subject of death vis-à-vis their children.

#### Present Educational Publications

There are various publications that attempt to give parents the information needed to open communication with



their children and guide them in the development of a death concept. One of the best-known authors in this area is Earl Grollman. His publications include a book and several pamphlets. He is the editor as well as a contributor to Explaining Death to Children, a collection from the writings of clergymen, psychologists, and other professionals on the subject of death. Although it is probably the best book of its kind and is directed at parents as well as professionals, it is unlikely that many parents would consider reading this erudite volume unless they were already convinced of the importance of the subject.

Grollman's pamphlet How to Explain Death to Children is written from a religious viewpoint and deals exclusively with talking to children about death at the time of the loss of a loved one. Its usefulness is limited. Talking About Death is another of Grollman's pamphlets. It is creatively written and specifically designed to be read to small children. The pamphlet is written as a dialogue that encourages the child's participation by responding to questions. The material may also be used as a source book for talking to an older child. The text seems more appropriate for the child who has experienced the loss of a loved one rather than as a tool for communicating on the general subject of death. This pamphlet appears to be too sophisticated for most parents who would probably be confused in trying to adapt the dialogue to a personal situation. The poetic style

could also be confusing for many youngsters.

Talking to Children About Death is a publication of the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. This is probably the best and most comprehensive of the pamphlets. It imparts information to parents on general death education as well as dealing with questions related to actual loss and grief. However, the pamphlet is lengthy and many parents would not take the time to read it unless they had a specific interest in the subject.

Jackson's book, Telling a Child About Death, is directed towards the needs of parents. Although Jackson is a Protestant clergyman, religious references are minimal. The text is informative but above the level of the average reader and unlikely to be read except by a few well-educated parents. In addition, the fact that it is lengthy and in book form makes it expensive and unworkable for wide circulation.

#### Further Parent Education

It appears that there is a need for additional educational materials to make parents aware of the importance of educating their children on the subject of death and providing guidance to proceed toward that goal. Producing the educational materials in a brief pamphlet form appears to be not only economically feasible for widespread distribution, but a brief, concise pamphlet in non-scholarly language would be appealing and more likely to be read. It is the purpose of this study to devise and evaluate such a pamphlet.

This pamphlet would not serve as a guide for dealing with a crisis situation when a child has actually lost a loved one, but would seek to provide guidance for an ongoing openness between parent and child on the subject of death. The importance of making death a natural and comfortable topic in the home so that a healthier adjustment could be made to a future loss would be stressed.

By noting some of the difficulties involved in being open with children on the subject of death, given the usual adult anxieties related to the subject and the related pressures of society, parents could be guided to examine their own feelings about death and to come to some understanding and resolution. In the pamphlet parents could be reassured that it would be difficult to cause harm to their children by encouraging communication on the subject of death. Suggestions could be made for opening up communication and simple dialogues could be given as examples for parents to model their own responses. All examples would be non-sectarian and would provide only a starting point for parents to seek and develop their own answers. It is hoped that such a pamphlet would provide awareness to parents and direct them to a healthier adjustment to the reality of death for themselves and for their children.

### Overview

Researchers have demonstrated that children think about and are capable of understanding death. Parents, however,

have chosen to ignore the subject either because of their own discomfort or in an effort to protect their children. Instead of passing on understanding and the ability to accept and cope with death, parents pass on only anxiety and a tradition of silence resulting in a general inability to deal with loss and grief.

It is the purpose of this study to develop a pamphlet for parents. This pamphlet could serve as an educational tool and an attempt to convince parents to be more open in discussing death with their children in an atmosphere of love, support, and understanding. As part of the study the pamphlet was distributed to parents of young children. Each parent was asked to complete a questionnaire on the effectiveness of the pamphlet. Comments and suggestions for improvement of the pamphlet were solicited on the questionnaire. These comments and suggestions were analyzed from the standpoint of the effectiveness of the pamphlet as well as improving the usefulness of the pamphlet and death-education materials in general.

## METHOD

### Development of the Pamphlet

The pamphlet was developed after careful study of previously developed educational materials and thorough review of the literature in areas related to the attitudes of society on the subject of death and the resulting effects on children. Special emphasis was placed on the capabilities of children to understand death and the importance of parents in guiding children to healthier emotional development. In the course of informal field testing, the pamphlet was rewritten several times in order to develop a brief, concise text that would be easily read and understood and would be well received by parents of young children.

### Description of the Pamphlet

The pamphlet consists of six brief sections plus an introduction and summary. Each of the sections is posed as an answer to a question. The questions were developed as a starting point to cover areas that would seem to be of interest to parents who were considering talking to their children about death. The six headings are: "Why would I want to talk to my children about death? It is so depressing," "Won't leveling with children about death disturb them?," "What kind of questions can I expect from my child?,"

"Are there any wrong answers to children's questions about death?," "How may parents deal with the death of a child's pet?"

The text of the pamphlet gives suggestions for starting conversations with children on the subject of death and provides sample dialogues for parents to model. Parents are informed that the dialogues are only examples and the importance of parents seeking their own answers is stressed. The importance of attitudes and atmosphere during communication is stressed above the actual responses to children's questions. Parents are referred to other sources for further information in the "In Summary" section and are encouraged to seek professional guidance for difficult problems. The text of the pamphlet is reproduced in Appendix A.

#### Evaluation of the Pamphlet

A questionnaire was devised to evaluate the success of the pamphlet. Item 1 was informational asking whether or not the parents had discussed death with their children previously. Items 2 and 3 were directed at determining the comfort level of parents while discussing death with their children before and after reading the pamphlet. Item 4 sought to determine if the pamphlet was easy to read and understand. Item 5 asked if the pamphlet was helpful and met a need for parents. A six point rating scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was provided for Items 2 through 5. Requests for explanation and comment

followed each of these items.

Items 6 through 11 sought ratings on a six point scale ranging from extremely ineffective to extremely effective on each of the six sections of the pamphlet. Item 12 sought any additional questions to be covered in a pamphlet such as this one. All comments and suggestions about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of any sections of the pamphlet were sought at the end of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix B.

### Subjects

The pamphlet and questionnaire were distributed to 50 parents at a private, non-sectarian nursery and primary school. The children at the school ranged in age from two and one-half years to eight years. Twenty-six parents returned completed questionnaires. No information was available concerning the age or sex of the 26 respondents.

## RESULTS

The data from administering the questionnaire assessing the pamphlet's usefulness were analyzed for each item separately. The results are therefore presented here as they bear on each of the questionnaire items. Eighteen (69%) of the parents completing the questionnaire indicated that they had previously discussed death with their children. Eight (31%) of the parents indicated that they had not previously discussed death with their children. The extent of previous discussion is unknown.

To the second inquiry, "Before reading this pamphlet I felt comfortable about discussing death with my child/children?", five (19%) of the respondents strongly agreed, seven (27%) moderately agreed, six (23%) slightly agreed, seven (17%) slightly disagreed, and one (4%) moderately disagreed. On this item 17 respondents commented. Nine comments (53%) indicated that the respondents were aware of the importance of being open with their children on all subjects and tried to act accordingly when the subject of death came up. However, the comments usually indicated that the parents were not necessarily comfortable with the subject of death and would not raise the subject themselves if their children did not ask questions. Six (35%) of the commenting respondents indicated that they had real fears and



problems regarding death and dreaded having to deal with the subject. Three respondents (12%) expressed their feelings of being unprepared to deal with the question and fearful of giving the wrong information to their children.

The third inquiry sought a response regarding the reader's comfort level in discussing death after reading the pamphlet. Of the respondents to item 3, ten (38%) strongly agreed that they felt comfortable discussing death with their children after reading the pamphlet, seven (27%) moderately agreed, seven (27%) slightly agreed, and two (8%) slightly disagreed. Twelve (46%) showed some increase in comfort level after reading the pamphlet while 13 (50%) remained at the same level, and one (4%) indicated that their comfort level decreased.

The mean responses to items 2 and 3 (measuring comfort level of discussing death before and after reading the pamphlet) were 4.3 and 4.96, respectively. A comparison of these two means through application of the t-test for correlated samples revealed that they were significantly different ( $t = 3.25$ ;  $df = 25$ ;  $p < .005$ ; one-tailed). It appears, therefore, that the pamphlet was successful in increasing parents' comfort in the discussion of death with their children.

Of the 17 commentors on item 3, eight (47%) indicated that the pamphlet was helpful and encouraging. These parents indicated in their comments that the pamphlet gave them a new viewpoint on answering their children's questions about

death and that they were definitely considering bringing up the subject with their children. Seven (41%) of the commentators agreed with the philosophy of the pamphlet but did not necessarily see the information as new for them. They felt the pamphlet reinforced their own feelings and saw it as helpful to others. Two (12%) of the commentators felt the pamphlet did not appreciably alter their comfort level. These commentators expressed strong difficulties in dealing with the subject.

Of the respondents to item 4, twenty-one (81%) strongly agreed that the pamphlet was easy to read and understand. Four (15%) moderately agreed and one (4%) slightly agreed. On item 5 fifteen (58%) strongly agreed that the pamphlet was helpful and met a need for parents. Six (23%) moderately agreed; four (15%) slightly agreed; while one (4%) strongly disagreed. Of the 12 parents that commented on this item, five (42%) thought the pamphlet met a need for other parents, but did not provide any significantly new information for them. Seven (58%) of the commentators found the pamphlet helpful for themselves.

Item 6 asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of the first section of the pamphlet, "Why would I want to talk to my children about death?". Six (23%) found it extremely effective, 14 (54%) moderately effective, four (19%) slightly effective, and one (4%) slightly ineffective. Comments were not solicited for each individual item in

items 6-11; see Appendix B).

Item 7 asked for a response to the effectiveness of the pamphlet's section, "Won't leveling with children about death disturb them?" Eleven (42%) rated this section extremely effective, nine (35%) moderately effective, and six (23%) slightly effective.

The third section of the pamphlet addressed the question, "How can parents bring up the subject of death?" In item 8 thirteen (50%) of the respondents rated this section extremely effective, nine (35%) rated it as moderately effective, and four (15%) as slightly effective.

"What kind of questions can I expect from my child?" was the fourth section of the pamphlet. Twelve (46%) rated this section as extremely effective, eight (32%) as moderately effective, five (19%) as slightly effective, and one (4%) as slightly ineffective.

Twelve (46%) of the respondents rated section 5 of the pamphlet, "Are there any wrong answers to children's questions about death?" as extremely effective. Ten (38%) rated this section as moderately effective, three (12%) as slightly effective, and one (4%) as slightly ineffective.

The sixth section of the pamphlet dealt with the question, "How may parents deal with the death of a child's pet?". Thirteen (50%) of the respondents rated this section as extremely effective, eight (31%) as moderately effective, four (15%) as slightly effective, and one (4%) as slightly ineffec-

tive. The frequency and means of responses to the individual questionnaire items are presented in Table 1. (See page 23).

It appears that the pamphlet was effective as an educational tool for parents. Twelve (46%) of the questionnaire respondents indicated that they felt more comfortable about discussing death with their children after reading the pamphlet. In addition, several of those who did not respond higher on the scale for item 3 than item 2, indicating that there was not an increase in their comfort level after reading the pamphlet, did comment that they thought the pamphlet was helpful. Twenty-one (81%) of the respondents agreed at either the moderate or extreme level that the pamphlet was helpful and meets a need for parents.

In evaluating the sections of the pamphlet, twenty (77%) of the respondents found the first, second, and fourth sections to be either moderately or extremely effective. Twenty-two (85%) found section 3 to be either moderately or extremely effective. Twenty-two (85%) found the fifth section to be either moderately or extremely effective. Twenty-one (81%) found the sixth section to be either moderately or extremely effective. Only one (4%) respondent rated any of the sections as ineffective to any degree.

Those who responded to the request for additional suggestions and comments were generally positive and enthusiastic about the pamphlet. Some parents did make suggestions

Table 1  
Frequency and Means of Responses to Questionnaire Items

Questionnaire Items	Responses		
	Yes	No	
1. Before reading the pamphlet I had discussed death with my child/children.	18	8	
2. Before reading this pamphlet I felt comfortable about discussing death with my child/children.	Number Agreeing 18	Number Disagreeing 8	Mean <sup>1</sup> 4.30
3. After reading this pamphlet, I feel comfortable about discussing death with my child/children.	24	2	4.96
4. I think the pamphlet was easy to read and understand.	26	0	5.77
5. I think this pamphlet is helpful and meets a need for parents	25	1	5.27
6. The first section of the pamphlet dealt with the question, "Why would I want to talk to my children about death?" How effective was the pamphlet in answering this question?	Number Citing Effective 25	Number Citing Ineffective 1	Mean <sup>2</sup> 4.96
7. The second section of the pamphlet dealt with the question, "Won't leveling with children about death disturb them?" How effective was the pamphlet in answering this question?	26	0	5.19
8. The third section of the pamphlet dealt with the question, "How can parents bring up the subject of death?" How effective was the pamphlet in answering this question?	26	0	5.35
9. The fourth section of the pamphlet dealt with the question, "What kind of questions can I expect from my child?" How effective was the pamphlet in answering this question?	25	1	5.19
10. The fifth section of the pamphlet dealt with the question, "Are there any wrong answers to children's questions about death?" How effective was the pamphlet in answering this question?	25	1	5.27
11. The sixth section of the pamphlet dealt with the question, "How may parents deal with the death of a child's pet?" How effective was the pamphlet in answering this question?	25	1	5.27

<sup>1</sup>Mean computed on scale: strongly agree = 6, moderately agree = 5, slightly agree = 4, slightly disagree = 3, moderately disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 1.

<sup>2</sup>Mean computed on scale: extremely effective = 6, moderately effective = 5, slightly effective = 4, slightly ineffective = 3, moderately ineffective = 2, extremely ineffective = 1.  
See Appendix B for questionnaire.

for additional questions to be covered in the pamphlet. Two respondents suggested inclusion of the question, "Should children attend funerals?". Others suggested additional topics such as the stages of grief, emotional reactions to loss, dealing with violent death, and the concept of heaven. Although these topics are of concern and interest to parents, in an effort to keep this pamphlet brief they were not included. The emphasis of this pamphlet was to encourage communication between parent and child prior to an actual confrontation with the death of a loved one. These additional topics would be important ones to include in future pamphlets dealing with the situation when a death of someone close has been experienced by a child. Overall, parents indicated by their responses and comments that they found the pamphlet helpful, found the sections of the pamphlet effectively presented, and that they were interested in further, more specific information on the subject.

## CONCLUSIONS

Changes in our society have replaced sex as the ultimate taboo subject with the subject of death. Although children today have less exposure to death in their own lives than did children several generations ago, they are exposed daily to fictional and non-fictional death on television. Parents, however, have chosen largely to ignore the subject, rationalizing that children are too young to understand or to be burdened with the truth. This avoidance may be counterproductive. Becker and Margolin (1967), in working with bereaved families, have shown that parents' goals of protecting their children from the truth result in a general disability in coping with grief and loss.

Can children comprehend, or manage thinking about death? Researchers such as Anthony (1972) have found evidence that small children are usually not distressed when first learning about death. It is their parents' behavior at this first encounter that first suggests that death is anxiety provoking. Nagy (1959), Anthony (1968), Rochlin (1967), and other researchers have demonstrated that death is a common topic in the thoughts of children and is not beyond their comprehension.

Since parents are the major educational resource for young children, it appears that an effort to change parents'

attitudes toward death at least as far as being more open and honest with their children, could be a start toward improved adjustment to bereavement in our society. Changing parents' attitudes in this manner is the focus of this study.

The purpose of the present study was to devise a short, readable pamphlet to serve as an educational resource for parents. The pamphlet attempts to convince parents that the subject of death could be openly discussed with children whenever the opportunity arises or whenever the subject is purposely introduced. This openness and educational process would ideally result in a better adjustment of children to inevitable future bereavements. Ideally these children would also have healthier attitudes to death as adults.

The pamphlet was distributed to parents of young children along with a questionnaire. The questionnaire sought information on the change in parents' level of comfort related to the discussion of death with their children before and after reading the pamphlet. It also addressed questions about the readability and helpfulness of the pamphlet. The effectiveness of each section of the pamphlet was sought in individual items on the questionnaire. Comments and suggestions for improvement of the pamphlet were solicited from all respondents.

Forty-six percent of the 26 respondents to the questionnaire reported increased comfort with the idea of discussing death with their children after reading the pamphlet.



Additional respondents indicated that the pamphlet was helpful even though they did not indicate an increased comfort level on the rating scale.

Comments solicited from respondents to the questionnaire were generally positive and enthusiastic. Each section of the pamphlet was rated as either moderately or extremely effective by 77 to 85 percent of the responding parents. However, it should be kept in mind that the parents who were given the pamphlet and asked for their response on the questionnaire did not represent a broad spectrum of the population. These were parents who had the means and interest to enroll their child in a private nursery and primary school. Further, the questionnaires were only returned by approximately one-half of those agreeing to read the pamphlet and respond to it. It is likely that those who responded were already more comfortable with the subject of death.

Still it appears that pamphlets such as the one created for this study would be received well by parents of young children and might be effective in guiding parents to open communication with their children on the subject of death. More openness and honesty between parents and children on the subject of death could lead to improved capabilities for coping with bereavement in our society.

It would be economically feasible for brief, inexpensive pamphlets such as the one from this study to be widely

distributed to parents through various agencies in the community. Appropriately health education and mental health agencies could make this or similar educational materials available to parents. Churches and synagogues could also make such materials available. In addition, classes or group sessions could be sponsored by these community organizations to further educate parents to deal with the subject as well as providing them with emotional support. These small efforts could build on one another to make some positive change in our society's attitudes to death and lead to healthier adjustment to inevitable losses and grief in our children's generation.

## APPENDIX A

### TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT DEATH

#### INTRODUCTION

In our society children do not have the direct experiences with death that past generations did when they lived on farms or in the tight family units where grandparents were part of the household. It was not too many generations ago that the death of an infant or older brother or sister was common. Today children still do commonly experience death, both fictional and non-fictional, but on the television.

Modern parents in many cases have chosen to ignore the existence of death and to refrain from talking about it as if it were obscene. Still children will eventually have to face reality and will have to do so either with the loving support of their parents or without this support.

This pamphlet is an effort to encourage parents to consider talking to their children about death. It attempts to give some basic guidelines and starting points for communication. It does not even start to deal with all possible answers to all possible questions. Questions and answers about death are very personal. Each child as an individual will ask his or her own questions. Each parent will have their own answers. This is only a starting point.

#### Why Would I Want to Talk to My Children about Death? It is so Depressing.

The subject of death is not pleasant and talking about death may make us feel uncomfortable. Modern parents are becoming more comfortable with explaining the facts of life to their children, but explaining the facts of death is still difficult.

We all know that sooner or later death will touch the life of every child. Every day our children are bombarded with confusing and maybe disturbing experiences with death on television. Losing a pet is not an unusual experience for a child, nor is losing a grandparent. What do our

children think about death or about dying? Perhaps we as parents could help them sort out their own thoughts and fears and better prepare them for the loss and grief that they will inevitably face someday.

Faced with our discomfort, it would be easier to ignore or avoid the subject of death. As a second choice, we might choose to distort the facts of death to make them less uncomfortable. We could, however, make what is probably the most difficult decision and level with our children about death.

### Won't Leveling With Children About Death Disturb Them?

The difficulty we adults have in dealing with death may not be shared by our children. Usually they are not as disturbed or fearful as they are curious when they first encounter death while exploring their world and finding a dead bird or grasshopper. However, children differ by age, maturity, personality and experience and it is impossible to predict just how disturbed they will be when they learn about death. Generally, it is unlikely that a child will be emotionally upset by an honest discussion of death.

Even for children who are upset when told about death, leveling with them will probably be worthwhile. Psychologists tell us that children who have some awareness and understanding of death before their lives are touched by the loss of a loved one are able to adjust more easily to their loss.

Sooner or later children will learn of death in one way or another. Although our society seems to have placed high demands on us to protect our children from all unpleasantness or disturbing information, our children's world is not completely controlled by us. Children may learn of death from their parents with loving reassurance and guidance or from others who are less caring and sensitive to the child's needs and concerns.

### How Can Parents Bring Up the Subject of Death?

As mentioned before, children at a young age often encounter a dead bird or insect while exploring their world. Usually the child expresses curiosity about the dead bird and why it doesn't move. It would certainly be more comfortable to ignore the dead bird or more natural to react with disgust to the lifeless creature and quickly find a new interest for the youngster. However, we would be missing an ideal opportunity in this common situation to communicate with our children about death.

The first lesson to our children might be very simple and taught without words: that it is not necessary to turn away from a dead creature in disgust. An older child may be ready for a conversation on the differences between being alive and dead and the wonder of being alive. Such a conversation could start with, "Being alive is so good. Isn't it sad that the bird can no longer fly or sing?"

If no opportunities to talk about life and death occur in a child's life, parents may want to bring up the subject themselves. Fictional and non-fictional deaths on television make good discussion starters. "The Waltons are sad that their grandfather died, aren't they?" will help a youngster express his feelings of sadness that Grandpa Walton died on the television drama. These are feelings that the child might have been too embarrassed to express otherwise. Understanding statements such as, "Eventually people become old and their bodies wear out like Grandpa Walton and they die. It is very sad for their families" will give a child an opportunity to ask any questions that he is curious about or fearful of. Nature movies or cartoon animal stories such as the classic "Bambi", depicting the natural events of life and death amongst animals are also good discussion starters. These discussions set the stage for future conversations. The child will understand that death is a subject that can be talked about.

There are also children's books that provide opportunities to discuss death. A well-known favorite is "Charlotte's Web", a story of a spider who is a beloved friend of the animals in the barnyard. She dies but is always remembered by her friends because of her kindnesses to them and because of her children who hatch from the eggs she lays before her death. "Little Women" is a good book for older children which tells the story of a family. Death occurs in the story as an integral part of family life. Your clergyman or librarian could suggest other books.

### What Kind of Questions Can I Expect from my Child?

If parents have decided to level with their children about death, they will surely be asked some hard questions. Here are some examples of possible questions and ways that these types of questions could be answered:

Child: What does dead mean?

Parent: Dead means not being alive anymore, like flowers that have wilted. Their life has finished. In animals or people the body doesn't work anymore, doesn't move, doesn't breathe, feel, hurt or sleep.

- Child: What happens to your body when you die?  
Parent: When a person dies, his or her body is put into a large box called a coffin. The coffin is buried in the ground. Sometimes the body is burned and the ashes are buried. The dead are not afraid or in pain when they are buried or burned.  
Child: Do only old people die?  
Parent: Usually their bodies get worn out. Once in awhile young people die from a very bad sickness or accident. This doesn't happen very often.  
Child: Grandma is old. Will she die soon?  
Parent: Probably sooner that we will since she is much older.

Naturally not all children ask the same questions. The age, maturity and personality of children affects their questions about death. Pre-schoolers see death as temporary, as if the dead person has gone on a long trip and is expected to return. Five to nine year olds often see death as a bogeyman or skeleton that takes people away. At this age children are concerned with losing people close to them. By the time a child is ten, he has a more realistic concept of death as the end of bodily life.

A pre-schooler may see death as temporary, the body still functioning but in the coffin, and their questions reflect this outlook. A simple, factual answer to questions such as these are all that young children with their limited attention spans usually require.

- Child: How do people eat when they're buried in a coffin?  
Parent: When someone is dead, they do not eat any longer.  
Child: How do people go to the bathroom when they're buried?  
Parent: People no longer need to go to the bathroom when they are dead.

As questions like this continue, parents may easily lose patience and discourage further questioning. However, the tone in which these questions are answered is probably more important than any facts given. Parents have an opportunity to communicate here that death is a subject that can be talked about openly.

An older child begins to realize that all living things eventually die and will become concerned with losing his or her loved ones. Questions at this age are more difficult to answer. Although we know all the answers, our emotional involvement makes the questions difficult to deal with.

Child: When will you and Daddy die, Mommy?  
 Parent: The time when Daddy and I will die is probably far off. You will probably be a grown person with a family of your own by that time. There will always be people around to love and care for you.

Leveling with children does not mean being brutally frank. The truth that all living things eventually die and that there are no guarantees as to the length of our lifetime may be softened without misrepresenting the truth.

Older children who understand the realities of death may ask questions that are even more difficult to answer. "Why is there death?" "Where will I go when I die?" Parents may need to explore answers to these questions along with their children. Many parents will have a religious tradition to draw on for these answers and will want to share these beliefs with their children. Others may wish to take the opportunity to formulate some answers for themselves. Often when parents have sorted out their own thoughts, they are more comfortable talking with their children.

#### Are There any Wrong Answers to Children's Questions about Death?

All parents do not necessarily agree on their answers to questions about death. Answers may be based on religious convictions or on a personal viewpoint of life and death. A perfectly acceptable answer to a child's questions may be, "We really don't know. Many people have different answers to that question, what do you think?" Parents need not feel embarrassed if they do not have all the answers. Discussing the subject of death with children in an open and loving way is more important than the actual answers given.

However, some answers that parents have been using for a long time in order to protect their children from the reality of death probably don't protect very well and may create additional problems as in these examples:

Child: Where is Grandma?  
 Parent: Grandma went on a long trip and won't be back for a long time.  
 Child: Why didn't she tell me she was going away or kiss me good-bye?  
 Parent: I guess she was in a hurry.  
 Child: (thinking) I love my Grandma very much. If she left without telling me, she must have been very angry with me or maybe she doesn't really love me.

A child may be left with these disturbing thoughts while waiting for his grandmother's return, until he learns the truth and realizes that he has been deceived.

Child: Where is Grandma?

Parent: We will never see Grandma again. She has gone to sleep for a long time. Let's not talk about it any more. It's time for bed.

Child: (thinking) I don't want to go to bed. I won't let myself fall asleep ever again because I might fall into Grandma's kind of sleep.

Although it is only natural to explain death as an "eternal sleep", children need a more specific explanation in order to avoid confusion and the fear of sleep.

Child: Why isn't Grandma here any more?

Parent: God loved Grandma and wanted her to be with him because she was so good.

Child: Billy's grandma is not gone. Isn't she good? God loves me, too. If I'm good will God take me away, too?

This parent's good intentions to comfort his or her child instead only disturbed the child by equating goodness with death.

The best answers to children's questions about death are truthful, simple and straightforward. When parents answer with fanciful explanations that they do not believe themselves, in the hope of bringing comfort to their children, they may cause problems. Children will learn at a later time that they have been deceived and may wonder about any information that they receive from their parents.

#### How May Parents Deal with the Death of a Child's Pet?

The death of a loved pet can be a very sad experience for a child. However, parents can use the experience to teach the inevitable lesson that living things die, but life goes on and we can learn to love others eventually.

In an attempt to lessen a child's pain, parents might belittle the loss or try to replace the pet immediately with or without the child's knowledge. It is probably better to let the child grieve and feel the parents' support and sympathy. This can serve as an emotional dress rehearsal for greater losses yet to come in a human being's life.

Telling a child, "Cheer up, we'll get another dog",



teaches that a loss can be instantly replaced and forgotten. Allowing a child to mourn a missed pet before turning to a new attachment can be a step on the road to maturity.

Parents might wish to encourage a funeral or memorial service for a dead pet. Children are able to express their feelings and fears better with ceremonies where they are not dependent on words. Pet funerals can also teach about human funerals and provide another opportunity to discuss the subject of death.

It is not unusual for children to believe that their thoughts and wishes have a "magical" power. A child may think at times that he would rather not have to care for a sometimes bothersome pet. If a pet dies, the child may seriously believe that his or her wishes actually caused the death. It can be very important for parents to avoid placing any blame for the pet's death on the child and to explain specifically that wishes cannot cause a pet or a person to die.

#### IN SUMMARY

This brief pamphlet has only scratched the surface on the subject of death as it relates to our children. Hopefully, the information presented will encourage parents to open up communication with their children about death. It is hoped, too, that parents will not be overly concerned with the correctness of their answers but will let their children know that death is a subject that can be talked about and explored in a loving, casual atmosphere within the family. Encouraging children to express their own thoughts and feelings on the subject is probably more important than having ready answers to all their questions.

Parents may wish to know more and to seek specific guidance for those situations where a child will experience, or has already experienced, the loss of a loved one. For further reading a pamphlet Talking to Children About Death may be obtained from the National Institute of Mental Health, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Md. 20857. Works by Earl Grollman including the book Explaining Death to Children and a pamphlet Talking About Death both published by Beacon Press, deal with the subject in greater depth. For difficult problems parents may wish to seek professional guidance.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE ON "TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT DEATH"

1. Before reading the pamphlet I had discussed death with my child/children. Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

2. Before reading this pamphlet I felt comfortable about discussing death with my child/children.

strongly      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      strongly  
disagree\_\_\_\_ disagree\_\_\_\_ disagree\_\_\_\_ agree\_\_\_\_ agree\_\_\_\_ agree\_\_\_\_

Please explain or comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. After reading this pamphlet, I feel comfortable about discussing death with my child/children.

strongly      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      strongly  
disagree\_\_\_\_ disagree\_\_\_\_ disagree\_\_\_\_ agree\_\_\_\_ agree\_\_\_\_ agree\_\_\_\_

Please explain or comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. I think the pamphlet was easy to read and understand.

strongly      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      strongly  
disagree\_\_\_\_ disagree\_\_\_\_ disagree\_\_\_\_ agree\_\_\_\_ agree\_\_\_\_ agree\_\_\_\_

Please explain or comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. I think this pamphlet is helpful and meets a need for parents.

strongly      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      strongly  
disagree\_\_\_\_ disagree\_\_\_\_ disagree\_\_\_\_ agree\_\_\_\_ agree\_\_\_\_ agree\_\_\_\_

Please explain or comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. The first section of the pamphlet dealt with the question, "Why would I want to talk to my children about death?" How effective (in your opinion) was the pamphlet in answering this question?  
 extremely    moderately    slightly    slightly    moderately    extremely  
 ineffective\_\_ ineffective\_\_ ineffective\_\_ effective\_\_ effective\_\_ effective\_\_
7. The second section of the pamphlet dealt with the question, "Won't leveling with children about death disturb them?" How effective (in your opinion) was the pamphlet in answering this question?  
 extremely    moderately    slightly    slightly    moderately    extremely  
 ineffective\_\_ ineffective\_\_ ineffective\_\_ effective\_\_ effective\_\_ effective\_\_
8. The third section of the pamphlet dealt with the question, "How can parents bring up the subject of death?" How effective (in your opinion) was the pamphlet in answering this question?  
 extremely    moderately    slightly    slightly    moderately    extremely  
 ineffective\_\_ ineffective\_\_ ineffective\_\_ effective\_\_ effective\_\_ effective\_\_
9. The fourth section of the pamphlet dealt with the question, "What kind of questions can I expect from my child?" How effective (in your opinion) was the pamphlet in answering this question?  
 extremely    moderately    slightly    slightly    moderately    extremely  
 ineffective\_\_ ineffective\_\_ ineffective\_\_ effective\_\_ effective\_\_ effective\_\_
10. The fifth section of the pamphlet dealt with the question, "Are there any wrong answers to children's questions about death?" How effective (in your opinion) was the pamphlet in answering this question?  
 extremely    moderately    slightly    slightly    moderately    extremely  
 ineffective\_\_ ineffective\_\_ ineffective\_\_ effective\_\_ effective\_\_ effective\_\_
11. The sixth section of the pamphlet dealt with the question, "How may parents deal with the death of a child's pet?" How effective (in your opinion) was the pamphlet in answering this question?  
 extremely    moderately    slightly    slightly    moderately    extremely  
 ineffective\_\_ ineffective\_\_ ineffective\_\_ effective\_\_ effective\_\_ effective\_\_
12. Are there any additional questions that you think should be covered in a pamphlet such as this?

---



---



---



---



---

## References

- Alexander, I. and Alderstein, A. Affective responses to the concept of death in a population of children and early adolescents. Journal of Genetics and Psychology, 1959, 93, 167-177.
- Anthony, S. The child's discovery of death. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1940.
- Anthony, S. The child's ideas of death. In Talbot, T. (ed.) The world of the child. New York: Doubleday, 1968.
- Anthony, S. The discovery of death in childhood and after. New York: Basic Books, 1972.
- Arnstein, H. About death. In what to tell your child. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962.
- Arthur, B. and Kemme, M. Bereavement in childhood. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 1964, 5, 37-49.
- Becker, D. and Margolin, F. How surviving parents handled their young children's adaptation to the crisis of loss. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1967, 37, 753-757.
- Bruner, J. Toward a theory of instruction. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1966.
- Cain, A., Fast, I. and Erickson, M. Children's disturbed reactions to the death of a sibling. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1964, 34, 741-751.
- Cook, S. Children and dying. New York: Health Sciences Publishing, 1973.
- Freud, A. and Burlingham, D. War and Children. In Talbot, T. (ed.) The world of the child. New York: Doubleday, 1968.
- Furman, E. A child's parent dies. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.
- Gorer, G. Death, grief, and mourning. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1965.
- Gorer, G. The pornography of death. In Schneidman, E. (Ed.) Death: current perspectives. New York: Jason Aronson, 1976.

- Grollman, E. (Ed.) Explaining death to children. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.
- Grollman, E. Talking about death, a dialogue between parent and child. Boston: Beacon Press, 1976.
- Hall, G.S. Senescence. New York: Appleton, 1922.
- Hunter, E. The questioning child and religion. Boston: Beacon Press, 1956.
- Ilg, F. and Ames, L. The Gesell Institute's child behavior. New York: Dell Publishing, 1955.
- Jackson, E. Telling a child about death. New York: Channel Press, 1965.
- Jackson, E. Understanding the teenager's response to death. In Kutscher, A. and Kutscher, L. (Eds.) Religion and bereavement. New York: Health Sciences Publishing, 1972.
- Kastenbaum, R. Time and death in adolescence. In Feifel, H. The meaning of death, New York: McGraw Hill, 1959.
- Kastenbaum, R. The child's understanding of death: how does it develop? In Grollman, E. (Ed.) Explaining death to children. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.
- Kastenbaum, R. and Aisenberg, R. The psychology of death. New York: Springer, 1972.
- Kavanaugh, R. Facing death. Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1972.
- Kubler-Ross, E. On death and dying. New York: MacMillan, 1969.
- Kubler-Ross, E. Death: the final stage of growth. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975.
- Levinson, B. The pet and the child's bereavement. Mental Hygiene, 1967, 51, 197-200.
- Linzer, N. Understanding bereavement and grief. New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1977.
- Manwell, E. and Fahs, S. Consider the children. Boston: Beacon Press, 1951.

- Maurer, A. The child's knowledge of non-existence. Journal of Existential Psychiatry, 1961, 2, 193-212.
- McIntire, M., Angle, C. and Struempier, L. The concept of death in Midwestern children and youth, American Journal of Diseases of Children, 1972, 123, 527-532.
- Moriarity, D. The loss of loved ones. Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1967.
- Nagy, M. The child's view of death, In Feifel, H. (Ed.) The meaning of death. New York: McGraw Hill, 1959.
- Piaget, J. Child's conception of the world. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1929.
- Piaget, J. The construction of reality in the child. New York: Basic Books, 1954.
- Rochlin, G. How younger children view death and themselves. In Grollman (Ed.) Explaining death to children. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.
- Schilder, P. and Wechsler, D. The attitude of children towards death. Journal of Genetics and Psychology, 1935, 45, 406.
- Shoor, M. and Speed, M. Delinquency as a manifestation of the mourning process. Psychiatric Quarterly, 1963, 37, 540-58.
- Wahl, C. The fear of death, Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic, 1958, 6, 214-23.
- Wolf, A. Helping your child to understand death. New York: Child Study Association of America, 1958.
- Wolfenstein, M. Children and the death of a president. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965.