

## Children's Understanding

- Adults, both parents and professionals, want to protect children, but in doing so often exclude and isolate them. To protect children from the truth is to leave them confused, unprotected from their fantasies and unsupported with their feelings.
- We are often inhibited by anxieties about doing or saying the wrong thing, about making things worse or causing lasting emotional damage. Such fears may mean children do not get the help they need.
- It is impossible for parents not to communicate with children. Children quickly sense when something serious is happening - they read body language, overhear conversations, notice changes in routine and observe physical changes. The issue is not whether to talk to children or not, but **who** will do the talking, **when** and **how**.
- Children acquire components of the death concept gradually, moving from concrete to abstract. Most children are said to reach a full understanding of death at the age of around nine to eleven years, realising it to be permanent, inevitable and universal. However, it has been shown that much younger children already know more about death and are more capable of processing additional information than most adults find it comfortable to accept
- We should always remember that ***children's capacity to understand events may well be much greater than their ability to articulate that understanding.***
- The only certain way to find out what children understand about the circumstances in which they find themselves is to ask them.

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