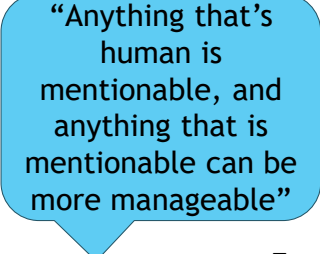


Good Grief!
Effective Practices
for Supporting
Conversations About
Death in Early
Childhood Settings

Melody Passemante Powell,
M.Ed. (she/her)



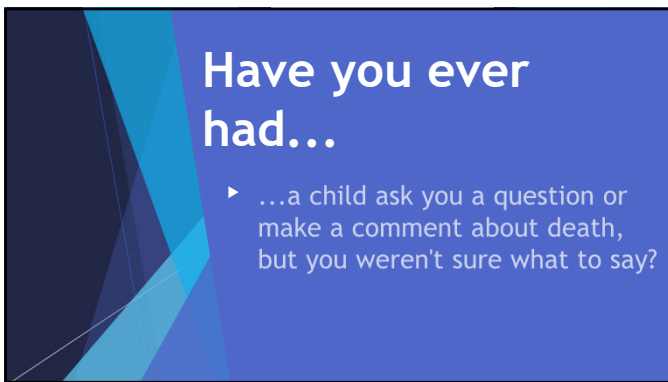
“Anything that’s
human is
mentionable, and
anything that is
mentionable can be
more manageable”

— Fred Rogers



My Why







Good News...

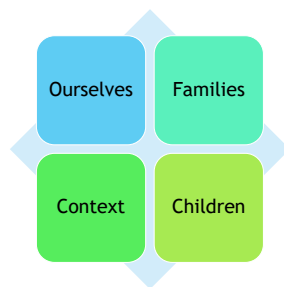
You do not have to
know every answer...

...to be exactly the
adult a child needs.

What's ONE
message you
received
about grief?



Four Considerations



Ourselves

What am I bringing into this conversation?

- Beliefs about death
- Feelings about grief
- Personal experiences

Families

What do I know about this family's perspective?

- Culture
- Faith & spirituality
- Family preferences
- Current experiences with grief

Our Context

What expectations shape my response?

- Policies
- Community expectations
- Communication with families

The Child

What does this child need from me right now?

- Development
- Prior knowledge
- Current experiences
- Individual needs





What concerns you MOST about talking with children about death?

- ▶ Saying the wrong thing
- ▶ Respecting family beliefs
- ▶ Managing my own emotions
- ▶ Not knowing how to answer
- ▶ I already feel confident

Children Look to Us

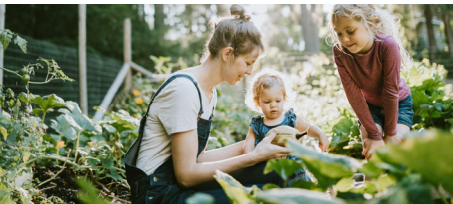




Present
Stay a grounded, steady presence.



Honest
Use clear, developmentally appropriate language.



Curious
Follow the child's lead and wonder with them.



Compassionate
Make feelings welcome.

Reflect

Present → How we show up.

Honest → What we say.

Curious → How we listen.

Compassionate → How we welcome children's emotions.



...But What
do I Actually
Say?

Thoughtful Starting Points

Situation	You might say...
Sudden illness	"Sometimes people who seem healthy get sick very suddenly. It doesn't happen very often, but it does happen sometimes."
Accident	"Human bodies are very strong, but sometimes an injury is so serious that the body stops working."
Older person or pet	"Sometimes people and animals die when they are very old because their bodies have worn out."

"Some People Believe..."

A phrase that honors diverse beliefs while keeping children included.

Big Questions

What happens after we die?

What is heaven?

What is a soul?

Am I going to die?

Closing Reflection

How are you feeling as you leave today's session?

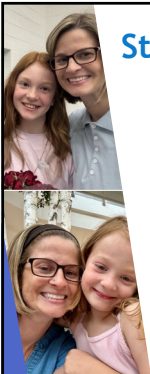
► *Share one word in the chat.*





Takeaways

- Reflect before you respond.
- Meet children where they are.
- Partner with families.
- There is no perfect response—only a thoughtful one.



Stay in touch!

Melodyapowell@gmail.com

[Melody Passemante Powell, M. Ed.](#) | [LinkedIn](#)