

BREAKING THE BAD NEWS

As parents and caregivers, our instincts are to protect. Breaking bad news to your children, regardless of the type of loss it pertains to, is a very hard thing to do. There's no way around it but through it. Here are some things that might help.

DO

Be Honest

Stick to the facts, and say you don't know when you don't know. You may think that hiding the truth will protect them, but it rarely works that way.

Be Direct

Don't assume what they do or don't know. Candid facts leave less room for guessing and incorrect interpretation.

Be Open

Let them know you can sit with their grief. Ask if they have questions and answer them in an honest, age-appropriate way. Don't judge their response. It may be different than what you expect.

DON'T

Sugarcoat It

Using flowery language and talking around the main point will just confuse them. Acknowledge that this news is sad, disappointing, etc.

Be Dramatic

Starting the conversation with "I have some bad news" or "you should sit down" creates more anxiety, especially for someone who has been on the receiving end of bad news before. Get right to the point.

Jump to the Silver Lining

Allow them to sit in the muck. Quickly changing the subject or trying to put a positive spin on it tells them it's not OK to feel what they're feeling.

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