

Here are
some practical
suggestions
for talking
about the
hard stuff.

Talking About Death Won't Kill You

Death is one of those things we don't usually talk about. Since we live in a society that avoids it, the idea of having the conversation might make you feel anxious and uncomfortable.

However, everyone dies. And talking about it doesn't make anything happen. And having those deep conversations can give everyone involved a real sense of peace.

Before the discussion

- Understand what your goals are for the conversation
- Identify any obstacles that could be in the way of reaching those goals
- Consider your own feeling about talking
- Recognize that you may need to have several conversations to meet the goals

Preparing for the conversation

- Assemble a list of questions
- Remind yourself not to take anything personally
- Involve the right people in the discussion
- Enter the conversation from a place of curiosity, respect, and with an open heart
- Pick a comfortable, quiet location
- Avoid emotionally charged times (e.g. holiday dinners or family events)

Structuring the discussion

- Begin by asking a question(s), touching on a familiar experience.
"What was it like for you at the end of your parents' lives?"
"How did you feel about how things transpired?"
"How would you like yours to be different?"
- Share a story. It could be from a movie, book, class, or your own life.
"I was watching the movie Terms of Endearment and it got me thinking."
"I recently re-read 'My Life with Morey.'"
- Ask for help. This recognizes that you, as their child, still may need their help.
"Will you help me so I can feel confident speaking for you if you are ever unable to speak for yourself?"

Make sure you're on the same page.

- Ask clarifying questions
- Encourage them to explain and share
"Say more about that."
"Tell me more, I never realized that."
- Focus on what you are hearing and reflect what you heard to make sure you have it

Find a natural end to the discussion.

- Share your gratitude
- Express appreciation

*Hopefully, you will all lean back in your chairs and say,
"that was so much easier than I expected." ■*