

What will happen?

When someone dies, their body stops working. They stop breathing and their heart stops beating. They may look a bit paler and after a little while their skin may feel cold. It is okay to touch or kiss the person if you would like to. You will not hurt them because when a person dies they do not feel anymore.

After someone we love has died, we may feel lots of different things like sadness, anger and relief. Again there is no right or wrong way to feel, but it helps to try to talk about your feelings with grown ups that you trust and ask about anything that is worrying you.

This may be a really difficult and painful time but there will be people around to help you.

Things will not always be so difficult. You will never forget them, but in time it will not hurt quite so much as it does today.

Remember that all the times that you have shared together and your special memories will last forever.

This has been adapted from a guide developed by the Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute and the Childhood Bereavement Network, United Kingdom.

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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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Saying Goodbye to Someone Special

Suggested ages 5-11 years



You may have already been told that your relative or friend is very ill. The doctors and nurses will do all they can to make sure that they are comfortable and not in any pain, but sadly we cannot make them well and we cannot make them better.

Sometimes when a person is very ill their body cannot work properly. We can see that this is happening because people may become a lot sleepier, their breathing can change and they no longer want or need to eat and drink.

This means that the person is dying and the doctors and nurses think that this is now happening to your special friend or relative.

What changes will I see?

As a person's body stops working as it should, their breathing may sound noisier. Sometimes people can seem a little bit restless but everyone is different.

You may want to spend time with them. You can talk to them and hold their hand if you want to. They can still hear you and will know that you are there but they will probably not be able to talk to you. Sometimes people decide that they do not want to spend time with their friend or relative at this time and that is okay too.

It is important that you do what you feel is right for you. If you choose not to visit you may want to send a message, card or letter with a relative or friend who may be visiting.

How will I feel?

When someone is dying we can feel lots of different things. We may feel very sad, angry that this is happening to us or just muddled up. Remember, there is no right or wrong way to feel.

If there is anything that you don't understand or that you are worried about, you should try to ask a grown up who can help you. You may notice that the grown ups in your family are feeling very sad as well, but they still want to help and look after you.

How long will it take?

Sometimes a person can be very sleepy for a number of days before they die. Other people may die more quickly. The important thing for you to remember is that the doctors and nurses will watch them very carefully and give them more medicine or different kinds of medicine to make sure that they're comfortable.

During this time you should still try to eat and drink, watch TV and speak to your friends, as you would normally do. It is very hard to be sad all the time and it may help you to do other things as well. This is VERY important.

