

End of Life Children's Book List

Children can be guided and supported to understand the mystery of death without having to fear it. Whether you are seeking to explain a loss and support a child to cope with grief or are wanting to start some conversation and learning for when a death inevitably occurs, children's illustrated literature is a useful asset. The titles in this list are or can be related to death and dying, and can help facilitate children's understanding of this simple yet profound topic. I offer my perspective on their content and have marked those that I more highly recommend with an asterisk (*). Titles are divided into four categories. Those most useful for simply starting a conversation about death and dying are listed first. Books with more direct teaching content are grouped secondly. Following that, I list books that primarily support the emotional process of loss and grief. Books about the loss of a pet are last. Of course, many titles fit into more than one of these subjective categories.

Some of the books include guides for adults. The author of *Ida, Always*—and possibly others—offers additional resources online. *Something Very Sad Happened* is especially written for toddlers. While content and length can indicate appropriate age levels, most meaningful children's books can be beneficial to a broad range of audiences, including adults. To help you select from and utilize these resources, following the list are some ideas on using picture books more purposefully. For those local to the Twin Cities, nearly all of these titles are available from [Hennepin County Library](#).

STARTING A CONVERSATION

***Always Remember** (2016), by Cece Ming and illustrated by Jago. After Old Turtle's passing, his community honors him by recalling his many contributions.

Birdsong (2019), by Julie Flett. There are many kinds of losses, including moving to a new and unfamiliar place. As the seasons pass in her new home, Katherena meets an elderly neighbor, Agnes, who teaches her about birds and gardens and pottery and phases of the moon. Katherena teaches Agnes about Cree seasons, and their friendship inspires Katherena's drawings. Agnes's health declines but the book ends without her explicitly dying. The book includes a few Cree words, complete with a brief glossary.

Bravo, Little Bird! (2023), by Annie Silvestro and illustrated by Ramona Kaulitzki. The old man's music inspires Little Bird to come and sing. The grandson comes to stay with them and learns to play music. The old man becomes too tired and eventually the house is quiet (though death is not specifically named) until all the other creatures come to show how the old man lives on in the music that touched their lives.

***City Dog, Country Frog** (2010), by Mo Willems and illustrated by Jon J. Muth. This book is not explicit, but death is clearly implied. City Dog befriends Country Frog, and the story chronicles their visits each season, which adds to the beauty and meaning of the story. By winter, City Dog cannot find Country Frog in their usual meeting place, but City Dog takes the lesson of friendship forward.

Holes in the Sky (2018), by Patricia Polacco. When her beloved grandmother dies and her family moves across the country, a young girl looks for the sign her grandmother promised, that she would continue to watch over her through the “holes in the sky.” Along the way, she makes new friends, learns about community, and helps another who is also grieving. Lengthy text makes this title more suitable for grades 3-5.

The Invisible String (2000), by Patrice Karst and illustrated by Geoff Stevenson. The invisible string is made of love and connects our hearts to all our loved ones when we are apart from them, even those in heaven. Only a single page mentions a deceased uncle. The author has partnered with a mental health professional to create *The Invisible String Workbook*, which I have not seen.

a kids book about death (2020), by Taryn Schuelke. This is not a picture book like all the other titles listed here, as it is not illustrated. It is intended to be read together to guide an adult:child interaction in a thorough, straightforward way. (FYI, there is a whole series of books from akidsbookabout.com similarly addressing a variety of topics.)

***A Map Into the World** (2019), by Kao Kalia Yang and illustrated by Seo Kim. A Hmong American family moves into a new home, and the daughter befriends an elderly couple across the street. After Ruth dies, the little girl uses sidewalk chalk to draw Bob "A map into the world. Just in case you need it." Beautifully written and subtle, the story highlights the intuitive insight of children.

The Next Place (1997), by Warren Hanson. A poetic vision of the afterlife spoken in the first person: “The next place that I go....” Use of abstract poetry makes this title more suitable for grades 3-5.

***Peach & Blue** (1994), by Sarah S. Kilborne and illustrated by Steve Johnson with Lou Fancher. This book is not explicitly about death or disability but can be used to facilitate conversation about both. Blue (a frog) befriends Peach, who is confined first to her tree then by her inability to ambulate. With Blue’s help, Peach gets to see the beauty of the world around them, while both know that Peach’s time is limited. Slightly longer text makes this title most appropriate for school age children or preschool age children with greater attention capabilities.

TEACHING ABOUT DEATH

***The Bird Feeder** (2022), by Andrew Larsen and illustrated by Dorothy Leung. This lovely book could have been placed in any of these first three categories. I have located it here because the overarching storyline is about grandma’s decline, showing different stages such as moving in with the family, moving to a facility, and receiving hospice care. Note that it talks about hospice as a place, which is rare, rather than a method of care.

***I Miss You: A First Look at Death** (2000), by Pat Thomas and illustrated by Lesley Harker. A comprehensive look at death and grieving including why people die, rituals/funerals, feelings, and ways of coping. It acknowledges diverse cultural beliefs and also illuminates the commonality of the concept of the soul.

I Miss You, Grandad (2011), by Anne de Bode and illustrated by Rien Broere. After Grandad dies suddenly, Tom's family begins to explain what it means to be dead, and about common funeral practices. In the end, Tom finds a way to say goodbye.

***Ida, Always** (2016), by Caron Levis and illustrated by Charles Santoso. A beautiful and moving book about end-of-life care. Ida and Gus are a pair of polar bears living in New York's Central Park Zoo. After Ida doesn't come out of her cave one day, Gus learns that she is dying. The two spend Ida's remaining days appreciating their time together. When Ida is gone, Gus continues, knowing that Ida will be with him always. The author's website includes an [Activity & Discussion Guide](#).

***Lifetimes: The beautiful way to explain death to children** (1983) by Bryan Mellonie and illustrated by Robert Ingpen. All living things "have beginnings, and endings, and there is living in between"...whether days for an insect, decades for humans, or centuries for some trees. (Originally published in 1983, the book gives the average human life span as "sixty or seventy years." This might be unduly alarming for some young children with grandparents of that age, when the current U.S. average life expectancy is 78.7 years.)

Maybe Dying Is Like Becoming a Butterfly (2019), by Pimm van Hest and illustrated by Lisa Brandenburg. Christopher and Grandpa have an honest conversation about what they know and believe about dying, including death's inevitability and unpredictability as well as what happens after.

***Something Very Sad Happened: A Toddler's Guide to Understanding Death** (2016), by Bonnie Zucker and illustrated by Kim Fleming. Using simple and brief language to explain death and grief, this book is especially written for ages 2-3. It includes helpful notes and also cues to tailor the story to individual circumstances.

Sonya's Chickens (2015), written and illustrated by Phoebe Wahl. This book is different from others listed here in that it is more about the cycle of life in the natural world. I include it because it is well done, but it is not directly transferable to the loss of a loved one or a pet. One of Sonya's beloved chickens is killed by a fox. Papa teaches Sonya that the fox is only caring for its family in the same way Papa cares for Sonya and Sonya cares for her chickens.

***What Happens When a Loved One Dies? Our First Talk About Death** (2016), by Jillian Roberts and illustrated by Cindy Revell. "Everything in nature has a life that is meaningful and important." After a lovely, brief explanation of death, the text follows a question and answer format—including topics of funerals, the soul, the afterlife, and grieving—making it easy for you to pick and choose which sections seem most appropriate for your child.

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death (1996), by Laurene Krasny Brown and illustrated by Marc Brown. A comprehensive teaching tool similar in content to *I Miss You*, by Thomas.

When Grandfather Flew (2021), by Patricia MacLachlan and illustrated by Chris Sheban. This book explores the idea of deceased loved ones communicating through animal signs or perhaps even spiritually inhabiting animal bodies. Emma tells the story of her and younger brother Milo's relationship with their grandfather, an avid birder. They observe grandfather's health decline as he

moves into their home, loses his sight, has a nurse attendant, and eventually dies. The book ends with Milo seeing a bald eagle, grandfather's favorite bird, soaring above.

COPING AND GRIEVING

***Badger's Parting Gifts** (1984), written and illustrated by Susan Varley. This book is similar in concept to *Always Remember*, but because the relationships are more developed I have grouped it in this category. After Badger's passing, the other animals grieve collectively and share memories individually of the things Badger taught them.

Cloud Lasso (2019), by Stephanie Ellis Shlaifer and illustrated by Melodie Stacey. "Delilah could see nothing but clouds for miles" since the death of her beloved grandfather who she called Doo-Dad. Eventually, she discovers she can use Doo-Dad's lasso to rope the clouds and find blue sky again. This is a sweet book showing that we can have some agency over our emotions. To me it would be important for the child to know also that sometimes we simply need to acknowledge and feel our feelings.

Cry, Heart, But Never Break (2016), by Glenn Ringtved and illustrated by Charlotte Pardi. Four children care for their ailing grandmother as Death arrives to visit, personified as a more kindly Grim Reaper. In addition to achieving his obvious purpose, Death also helps the children—each with their own reaction to him—consider how life brings together Sorrow and Delight, Grief and Joy.

***Death is Stupid** (2020), by Anastasia Higginbotham. Death can be confusing for young people, and adults often make it more so. This book answers questions, provides a guide to finding understanding for oneself, and offers helpful suggestions.

***The Goodbye Book** (2015), written and illustrated by Todd Parr. Examples of the grieving process are shown in simple, clear language coupled with vibrant, imaginative illustration. This book is applicable to other goodbyes as it does not mention death specifically.

***Goodbye, Grandpa** (2018), by Jelleke Rijken and Mack van Gageldonk. When Grandpa doesn't wake up, Elephant helps Bear understand what has happened. Together with Chicken, they honor Grandpa, as well as their own emotions, through expression and ritual. Animal characters--rather than human--may offer an additional buffer for more sensitive children.

***Grandma's Gloves** (2010), by Cecil Castellucci and illustrated by Julia Denos. The main character enjoys spending time and learning from Grandma about – among other things – gardening. Grandma goes into the hospital, seemingly forgets everything, and eventually dies. The main character is indifferent to the locket keepsake her mother offers, but she finds great comfort in keeping Grandma's gardening gloves.

Grandpa's Stories: A Book of Remembering (2019), by Joseph Coelho and illustrated by Allison Colpoys. A child tells the story of fun times shared with their beloved grandfather throughout each season. After winter, Grandpa is no longer with the family, and they savor the memories, collecting

writings and drawings in a notebook that was Grandpa's final gift. This book offers representation of a family from India.

Lost in the Clouds (2021), by Tom Tinn-Disbury. Billy's mother now lives in the clouds, which shift from bright and wispy to dark and stormy, mirroring Billy's fluctuating emotions as he moves through grieving. Billy's father offers support and reassurance. This book offers representation of a family of color and includes a "Guide for Grown-Ups."

Luna's Red Hat, by Emmi Smid. On the one-year anniversary of her mother's death by suicide, Luna's father acknowledges and affirms her anger and helps to explore other feelings and questions.

***Many Shapes of Clay: A Story of Healing**, by Kenesha Sneed. Eisha's mother, a potter, helps Eisha make a clay shape that reminds her of a special memory with her father. When the figure which Eisha carries with her eventually breaks, together they refashion the pieces into something new. This beautiful book is layered with poignant messages about grief delivered in an understated way. It also offers representation of a family of color.

The Memory Box: A Book About Grief, by Joanna Rowland. Part of the grieving process may include the fear of eventually forgetting the deceased loved one. The text consists of a child's thoughts addressed directly to the deceased loved one—referred to in the second person rather than being identified—as she gathers and processes memories in order to assure herself that she will always remember.

Missing Mommy, by Rebecca Cobb. Spoken from the point of view of a child, this book examines the confusing thoughts and emotions of losing a parent and concludes with healthy perspectives for moving forward. Short and simple text makes it appropriate for a wide range of children.

***One Wave at a Time**, by Holly Thompson. A family of four becomes a family of three when the father dies. The older sibling describes navigating waves of feelings--sadness, anger, fear, numbness, as well as times of joy that still come. Healing is facilitated through rituals of remembering and through connections to others. This is an excellent book that skillfully covers a lot of ground without using too many words.

***The Rabbit Listened**, by Cori Doerrfeld. This book is not about death, but its important lesson for coping with strongly emotive situations and for supporting the coping of others has broad implications and learning for both children and adults. When Taylor's creation is destroyed, animal friends come one by one with good intentions to talk, shout, fix, hide, etc. But Taylor doesn't want any of it. When Taylor is ready, the rabbit comes to simply be present and allow Taylor to do whatever is needed.

***Remembering Mom's Kubbat Halab**, by Medeia Sharif. Bushra fondly remembers her mother's cooking, but no one can make kubbat halab as good as she could. Bushra's family comes together through food and cooking, and accepting that things will never be the same without her mother.

***Samantha Jane's Missing Smile: A Story About Coping with the Loss of a Parent** (2007), by Julie Kaplow and Donna Pincus, and illustrated by Beth Spiegel. This book covers a lot ground (and

consequently has lengthier text) including repression vs. expression of emotions, ways that the deceased parent can still have presence through memories and reminders, and fear that allowing joy means lack of love for the deceased. Complex aspects are appropriately related at a child's level (elementary/older elementary).

The Scar, by Charlotte Moundlic. When his mom dies, a young boy is overwhelmed with thoughts and emotions. Through a scraped knee and some grandmotherly wisdom he learns that scars are signs of healing but also help us remember. Lengthy text and higher conceptual thinking make this title more suitable for grades 3-5.

***The Shared Room** (2020), by Kao Kalia Yang and illustrated by Xee Reiter. Based on a true event, this is the story of a Hmong American family living with the loss of their daughter/sister through a drowning accident. It centers on the decision to move the oldest son into her former bedroom. The true-to-life details speak to the universality of loss and grief in a way that is different from a more generic story. It is through the specifics of this family that we are able to consider the specifics of our own experiences, whether they are similar or different.

Sitting Shiva (2022), by Erin Silver and illustrated by Michelle Theodore. After her mother's death, Jenny observes her father to learn about the Jewish traditions of her family when someone dies. When friends and family arrive during shiva, she wants to stay in her room. Jenny eventually discovers the comfort of community both large and intimate as the story ends with her and her father snuggled under a blanket knit by her mother.

A Stopwatch from Grandpa (2020), by Loretta Garbutt and illustrated by Carmen Mok. When the main character used to hang out with Grandpa, they timed everything from eating cookies to a caterpillar crawling up a pant leg. Now that he is gone (the book does not explicitly say he died), nothing seems fun and "Time just stops." Grandpa's stopwatch is put away. When it is retrieved some time later, it generates good feelings and memories.

***Tear Soup: A Recipe For Healing After Loss** (1999), by Pat Schwiebert & Chuck DeKlyen, and illustrated by Taylor Bills. Grandy has suffered a terrible loss and tends to her grief with the care and attention one might devote to simmering a special healing broth. This book's wisdom is served in generous helpings for both children and adults, emphasizing the individuality of the grief experience. It includes extensive resources, and you can find much more online at [GriefWatch.com](https://griefwatch.com). Lengthy text and reliance on metaphor make this title more suitable for grades 3-5 (as well as being appropriate for use with adults).

***The Treasure Box** (2022), by Dave Keane and illustrated by Rahele Jomepour Bell. The main character enjoys collecting found objects into a treasure box to share with Grandpa when he and Grammy visit. When Grandpa can no longer visit, they take their treasure box to him. When he is in the hospital and not responding, they leave new treasures at his bedside. After he dies, they "say goodbye to Grandpa in my heart." After a while, Grammy returns to visit, bringing treasures that Grandpa had wanted to share.

A Walk in the Woods (2023), by Nikki Grimes and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney and Brian Pinkney. A young boy finds a treasure map left by his recently deceased father. The map leads him to revisit the woods he walked with his father many times, where he finds his father's drawings and poems. Longer text makes this book most suitable for upper elementary grades. Additionally, it offers representation of a family of color.

Where Do They Go? (2016), by Julia Alvarez and illustrated by Sabra Field. This book poetically explores the question posed in the title as a young boy wonders about possibilities ranging from the more ethereal and spiritual to the practical and sensory.

DEATH OF AN ANIMAL COMPANION

***Addy's Cup of Sugar** (2020), written and illustrated by Jon J. Muth. After Addy's beloved pet cat Trumpet dies, she seeks remedy from her friend Stillwater, who says he can help her if she brings him a cup of sugar borrowed from a neighbor who has never encountered death. Addy returns empty-handed, of course, and learns that loss is universal. Stillwater reminds her that Trumpet will always be in her heart. This book is a retelling of a well-known Buddhist teaching.

Blue (2018), by Laura Vaccaro Seeger. Death is not exactly explicit in this book, but the simple story told mostly through illustration clearly shows the lifespan of a beloved canine companion named Blue, shown developmentally parallel to the growth and life stages of their human companion. A very sweet book.

A Dog Like Jack (1999), by Dyanne Disalvo-Ryan. A nice book but it seems unnecessarily long, so it is not as appropriate for preschool age. It also references Christmas which is not applicable to some families. Jack is adopted from a shelter with a backstory about his former family. The story follows the life shared between Jack and his young human companion, and Jack's eventual death. I like that it ends with the family not yet ready for a new pet.

Goodbye Mousie (2001), by Robie H. Harris and illustrated by Jan Ormerod. When Daddy explains that Mousie is dead, Mousie's primary human companion is mad. And sad. Mommy and Daddy patiently answer questions and help them bury Mousie in a specially decorated box including some of Mousie's favorite things.

***Harry & Hopper** (2009), by Margaret Wild and illustrated by Freya Blackwood. Harry and Hopper grew up together and helped each other along the way. When Hopper is killed in an (unnamed) accident, Harry shuts down. After Hopper makes a series of visits in Harry's dreams, Harry is able to say goodbye.

I Miss My Pet: A First Look at When a Pet Dies (2012), by Pat Thomas and illustrated by Lesley Harker. A straightforward teaching tool about the life and death of a beloved pet.

Missing Jack (2015), by Rebecca Elliott. Jack was the best cat ever, but he got old and eventually died. His young human companion doesn't want another cat; they want Jack. But they meet a cat who seems great in a different way and so decides "he can live here."

Pumpkin and Me (2021), by Alicia Acosta and illustrated by Merce Gali. After Pumpkin the dog dies, her young human companion notices strange things like a black cloud hanging over their head, what must be soap in her eyes, and an octopus squeezing her chest. Dad, mom, and grandma explain that these are normal experiences of grief. Then, after Pumpkin visits in a dream to showcase all the good times they had, the main character begins to feel better.

Saying Goodbye to Lulu (2004), by Corinne Demas and illustrated by Ard Hoyt. As Lulu the dog declines and eventually dies, her young human companion is mindfully with her. She remembers the good times and wants Lulu back the way she was. After Lulu is gone and the family has buried her in the backyard, it takes time for the main character to be able to say goodbye, making way eventually for acceptance of getting a new puppy.

A Stone for Sascha (2018), by Aaron Becker. Summer vacation is not the same after beloved family dog Sascha has died. A young girl collects a special stone at the beach that helps her connect across time and cultures to the lesson of impermanence. This book relies entirely on illustration and has no text. It also offers representation of a family of color.

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney (1971), by Judith Viorst and illustrated by Erik Blegvad. When Barney the cat dies and the family buries him in the backyard, his surviving young human companion questions whether Barney is now in heaven or in the ground. He reflects on Barney's positive qualities as part of his exploration of coping with grief.

***Tiger Rose Said Goodbye** (2011), by Jane Yolen and illustrated by Jim LaMarche. Beloved cat Tiger Rose is aware of her decline and takes time to visit friends of various species to say goodbye. This is a beautiful book culminating with Tiger Rose ascending "into the luminous blue sky."

When a Pet Dies (1988), by Fred Rogers. A frank yet gentle look at the life, love, and loss of caring for a pet. Photographs rather than drawings show that this book is dated, but the straightforward text remains applicable.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

It is not necessary—nor probably a good idea—to turn the reading of the book(s) into an academic exercise, but putting intention behind your effort can enhance the child's experience as well as your own. Here are some things to consider.

Think about your purpose.

Many of these titles can be read to any age child to plant a seed for future understanding. If you want to do more than that, increase your preparation accordingly. Do you want to introduce the topic and see how the child reacts? Or start a meaningful conversation? Are you breaking news about the illness of a particular loved one? Has a death occurred, and you want to give the child support for understanding, emotional coping, and healthy grieving? Keep your purpose in mind as you proceed.

Read the book aloud to yourself.

Children's picture books are meant to be read aloud, and you may hear nuances when you practice being the listener that you miss reading only in your head. See what arises for you. It is also a time to practice tone, inflection, and pace.

Consider how you will introduce the book.

A priming activity is anything that starts our brains thinking about the topic in advance of—and in order to get the most from—a learning experience. The more context provided, especially if directly connected to the child's lived experience, the more likely the book will be meaningful. "Remember when..." can be a useful lead-in, as in "Remember when you asked me where the flowers go in winter?" or "Remember when you were very young and we used to visit Auntie Lorraine?" or "Remember when you asked Daddy why he was crying?" Alternatively, you might start by sharing a personal story. Or simply state the topic and invite the child to share what they already know, giving you opportunity to assess their current level of understanding. (Keep in mind that the most common way children today hear the word "dead" is in reference to an electronic device needing to be recharged.)

Pause at meaningful points to ask reflective questions.

When you practice reading the book, look for natural opportunities to pause and check in with the child. Some basic questions might sound like "Have you ever...?" Finish the sentence by connecting to what the character just experienced in the book. Other useful reflective questions include:

- How are you feeling right now?
- What are you thinking about?
- What would you have done?
- What do you think is going to happen next?

Have a plan but don't be attached to it; instead, follow where the child leads.

Once you have put some effort into preparation, you are ready to call upon your own wisdom moment to moment, which may or may not be as you had envisioned. It is more important to be present to the child than to follow through with a plan. Children have innate wisdom and curiosity that will lead them where they need to go. Often our job is to provide opportunity and authentic listening to help them find their way. If the child is interactive, be open to following their lead. If needed, you can always double back at another time to cover something you feel may have been missed.

Answer questions honestly with concise and age-appropriate responses.

Honesty about emotions and emotionally arousing experiences is a gift to children. As a general rule, if a child is asking then they are ready for some kind of truthful answer. Remember that some children will be hesitant and might benefit from explicit permission to ask questions.

Simple responses are usually best, as is maintaining boundaries. For example, it is appropriate to explain “I cried so much because I was so sad that I would never see Grandma again” but avoid going into detail about your own grieving process, especially if it was affected by having a complicated relationship with the deceased. Remember also that “I don’t know” is a perfectly fine answer, perhaps followed by “What do you think?” and/or “Let’s explore that together.”

Know that all feelings are okay to have, or to not have.

This is an important point of emotional intelligence, so state it explicitly for the child. (If behavior is an area of concern, you might add “some behaviors are okay, and some behaviors are not okay.”) The child may not have or show emotions in the way you expect, so be aware of your expectations and prepared to let go of them.

Assess and follow up.

Was the book or the experience of sharing it impactful? How so? If it wasn’t, then do you want to try it a second time? Or try a different book? Or move on to a different approach? If it was, then it is likely worth some form of follow up. Here are some possibilities:

- Read it again. Repeated exposure facilitates deeper levels of understanding. You might put the book into a rotation of bedtime books and allow the child to self-select (or not). Or include the book in any other reading routine you may have in your home.
- Refer back to the book or the learning in a meaningful moment, e.g., “Sweetie, remember how Taylor wasn’t ready to talk...” (*The Rabbit Listened*).

FINAL THOUGHTS

A well-crafted children’s picture book is at once a magnificent work of art and a practical teaching and learning tool. You may, of course, need or desire additional tools. Remember that grief is a holistic process, so it may show up and/or be addressed through multiple avenues—mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. There are children’s activity books that facilitate more kinesthetic and creative involvement, such as *Help Me Say Goodbye: Activities for Helping Kids Cope When a Special Person Dies*, by Janis Silverman, or *When Someone Dies: A Child-Caregiver Activity Book*, by the National Alliance for Grieving Children (NAGC). You can find more information and additional resources at the [NAGC website](https://www.nagc.org/).

As part of the process, consider becoming more aware of your own comfort levels related to thinking and talking about death and dying, including your own inevitable end of life. There is a growing social movement around end-of-life issues related to hospice and palliative care, the concept of a good death, home deaths and home funerals, death midwives/doulas, and body disposition alternatives such as green burial. You can search online for any of those topics, or for a Death Café happening near you to join others in conversation.

Death is something that affects 100% of the population. Though it is sad, of course, it does not have to be dark or scary. In fact, many find deep meaning and spiritual development associated with end of life. My own interest began with an excellent book entitled *7 Lessons for Living from the Dying: How to Nurture What Really Matters* (originally published as *What Really Matters: 7 Lessons for Living from the Stories of the Dying*), by [Karen Wyatt](#). Like a children's book, it is concise and meaningful. While it is not illustrated, it is full of illustrative stories from Dr. Wyatt's practice as a hospice physician.

One of the most important ways to support children is to show up with integrity and authenticity. The more you expand your understanding and become comfortable with death (or any other topic you wish to address), the more you will be able to be genuinely present.

SPECIFIC SITUATIONS OR POPULATIONS

I found these titles that deal with specific deaths, but I have not yet been able to review them.

The Cardinal's Gift: A True Story of Finding Hope in Grief, by Carole Heaney and illustrated by Marlo Garnsworthy (a father's death).

Someone I Love Died by Suicide, by Doreen Cammarata and illustrated by Michael Ives Volk & Leela Accetta (suicide).

Thinking of Mom: A Children's Picture Book About Coping with Loss, by M. O. Lufkin and illustrated by Nina Khalova (a mother's death).

Why Would Someone Want to Die?, by Rebecca C. Schmidt and illustrated by Cynthia G. Brundage (a father's suicide).

If your child is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, I recommend sticking with books that are more concrete such as *Lifetimes*, by Bryan Mellonie; *What Happens When a Loved One Dies?*, by Jillian Roberts; or *I Miss You*, by Pat Thomas. Better yet, check out these fantastic resources at [Autism Speaks](#).

This bibliography is compiled by Michael Sala.

Find the most updated (and downloadable) version online at
<https://presentpurpose.weebly.com/end-of-life-childrens-book-list.html>

Contact me at michael.presentpurpose@gmail.com

Learn more about me at <https://presentpurpose.weebly.com/>