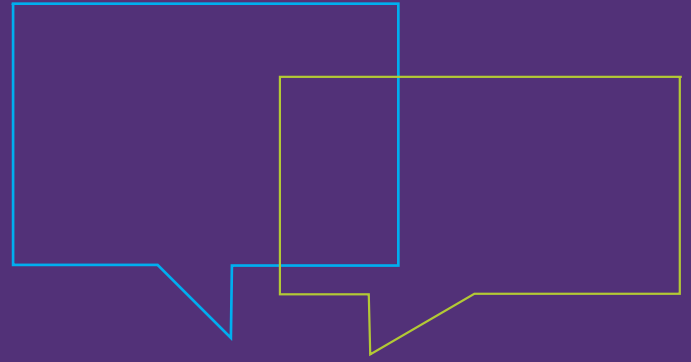


How to talk about parental overdose



How do we talk about drugs and addiction? And how do we talk about death by overdose? Some children already know that life had been a struggle or had been “different” with ongoing trauma and change. Other children are not aware that their parent struggled with drug-related issues, so both the drugs and death are foreign experiences. The separation or death of a loved one is a difficult and often overwhelming experience for children.

A child’s understanding.

There’s no single answer as to how much information to tell a child, but you can determine this by the child’s:

- age,
- maturity,
- and what they have already known about the condition.

Telling the truth.

Well-meaning adults sometimes are tempted to “protect” children by avoiding the truth or avoiding the conversation overall, but the foundation of truth can be built upon now and for future conversations. If caregivers and professionals avoid the truth, children have trouble with mourning and/or moving forward. Eventually, the truth comes out, and when they discover that they weren’t told the truth, they will be angry at those who lied to them. Truthful conversations are a form of respect which demonstrate that no matter how hard the situation, openness and honesty is the best path.

