

## What if a child does not want to go?

Children should not be forced to go. Offer them an alternative that is comfortable to you all, like going to a friends. You might want to think about ways of marking the occasion for them in their own way.

## Ways to involve children

You can involve them by letting them draw a picture you could send or allowing them to put something special in the coffin. Let them help with choosing flowers, music and hymns or writing on a card.

Older children might want to take an active part in the service with readings or carrying the coffin.

If a child does not attend the funeral it can be helpful to offer to take them to see the flowers or visit the grave as soon as possible after the funeral.

You could have a special ceremony for them where they let off balloons with a card attached that they have drawn or written on.



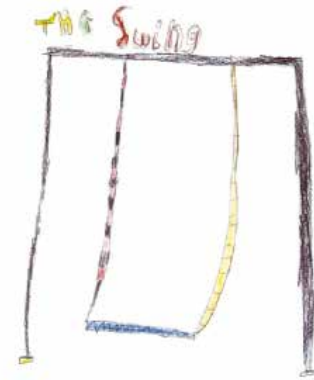
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## THE SWING



## Children and funerals

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Parents and carers naturally want to protect their children from the pain of grief and when someone dies it is very hard to know what to do for the best.

Deciding whether to allow a child to attend a funeral can be a difficult decision. Sometimes families have set ideas about what should happen depending on their own beliefs or religion. Some families might expect children to attend and others have conflicts when they have different opinions.

## Should children go to funerals?

Children have reported that they were glad they were given a choice whether or not to go. Children are usually more scared about what they don't know than by what they are allowed to be a part of. By giving the child the choice to go to a funeral helps them to feel they are not being left out.

Ultimately the family of the deceased might decide that children should not attend and this will need to be explained to the child.

## Explaining a funeral

Many children may not have been to a funeral and before they can make a decision about whether they want to go or not they will need to know what happens. Keep the information short.

### You could say:

*"It is a special time when they family and people that knew the person get together to remember them and say goodbye. They go to a place where there will be music and singing, and prayers, usually someone says something about the person's life and how they will remember them. Some people will be very sad and cry and others will be remembering the good times they had together."*

## Explaining about cremation and burial

When a person dies we have to decide what to do with the body. Explain to them cremation and burial does not hurt because the person who has died no longer needs their body, that their body no longer works.

### You could say:

*"We put the body in a box called a coffin*

*and take it to a place where we put it in the ground" or "it goes into a special oven and is made into a dust called ashes."*

If you explain to them what will happen most children of school age will understand enough to go to a funeral.

It can be useful to allow them to take e.g. a favourite toy, and to tell them that there will be someone who can take them outside if they want to leave. This person does not have to be you. If you explain your role to the child and talk with them about what to expect and when you will be able to be with them, they will usually be able to manage the day.

## What if I decide that I don't want children at the funeral?

If that is how you feel then you should not feel bad about it.

Give children an honest explanation that grown-ups find funerals difficult too because they are very sad occasions and talk to them about other ways you can involve them.