

Time to talk about death



There's an elephant in the room.

It is large and squatting, so it is hard to get around it.

Yet we squeeze by with "How are you?" and "I'm fine,"

and a thousand other forms of trivial chatter.

We talk about the weather.

We talk about work.

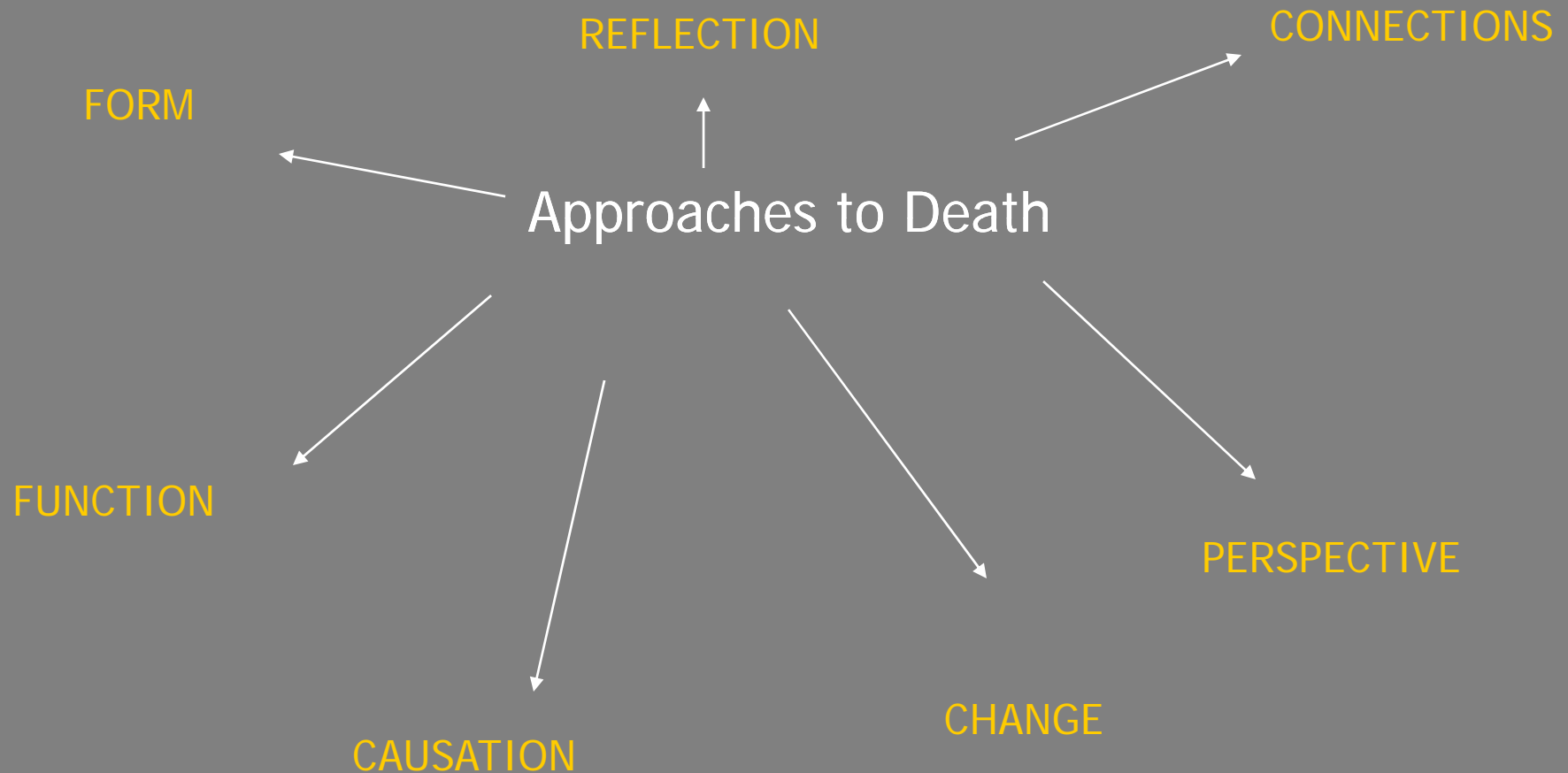
We talk about everything else, except the elephant in the room.

Why?



**What is dying?
What happens?
How do you feel?
How do I feel when
someone else dies?
Where do I get my security
to cope with the inevitable
or unchangeable.**

TASK: Knowledge & Understanding



- My own death
- Death of a student
- Death of a teacher
- Death of a parent
- School tragedy – eg. 3 students killed in a car accident
10 members of the school community killed in a boat accident, A fire, A local bombing
- Types of deaths – accidental / expected – terminally ill children
- Different cultures – different rituals, 24 hrs – Muslim
2 weeks of mourning – Hindi, Greek orthodox – 6 weeks

What are the practicalities, processes, consequences?

'We are more at ease with the notion of loss, than with death itself.'
Maggie Jackson – A Teacher's handbook of Death (2002)

Explaining about death can be extremely difficult for adults. Some feel uncomfortable...

Can children even understand the concept?

Piaget thought not, others disagree.

Bowlby's (1981) 4 stages of grief in children:

- Numbing – Protest – accepting the reality
- Pain of grief – yearning – despair - withdrawal
- Disorganisation – adjusting to a new world
- Reorganisation – investing in new relationships

The background of the slide is a blue-tinted photograph of a vast ocean under a cloudy sky. The water is a deep blue with subtle ripples, and the sky is a lighter blue with wispy white clouds. The horizon line is visible in the middle of the frame.

TASK: Whose responsibility is it?

Social responsibility

- Whose responsibility is it?

Friends
Teachers
Students
Colleagues
Administration
Parents
Grandparents
Relatives
Religious advisors
Counsellors

What can we do?

- Educators

Integrating death across
the curriculum

- Administration
Creating a critical
incident policy

Erica Brown – Loss, change & grief An Educational Perspective (1999)

“To deny children opportunities to understand about death and explore their own feelings is to sell them short.”

Actively integrating the concept into the curriculum

- PYP – units of inquiry
- MYP – trans disciplinary, life cycles etc.
- DP – TOK, Spanish day of death
- Pastoral

The Dead

coffins

what are the connections between prayers and death?

Big coffin 1m by 40cm
in side funeral scene
with small coffin 10cm by 4cm. *

- Beliefs and Values shape how people view each other and the world.

how do different religions treat their dead?

- * Sikh
- * Buddhist
- * Muslim
- * Christian
- * Hindu

funerals

what do the different religions believe happen to you after you die?

Similarities

Kyle
Chloe
Sara
Owen

The End of Life

Key Stage 1 and 2

Subjects covered: Circle of life, Emotional literacy, PSHE, Citizenship and Science

Lesson Aim

To enable children to explore their natural interest in ageing, death and dying.

Objectives

Pupils will:

1. Become more aware of the permanence of death.
2. Become more familiar with words associated with death and dying.
3. Develop some strategies for coping when sad things happen.
4. Appreciate the importance of remembering happy times with dead people or pets.

Time

Flexible, but approximately 30 minutes

Resources

- A collection of objects from the natural world, which were once alive e.g. seashells, dried flowers, seed pods, dried roots, bark, drift wood, dead leaves, small animal skeletons, dead insects.
- A bunch of seedless grapes.
- Some raisins.

Setting the scene.

Display the objects to arouse the children's curiosity.

Invite the children to pick up the objects, and to say what they feel like:

- Hold a piece of bark and feel the texture and the pattern. Trace grooves in the driftwood with fingers.
- Hold a seashell to your ear. Can you hear anything? Explore the hole with fingers.
- Scrunch dry leaves and listen to the crackling sound, Look at the beautiful shapes of the seed heads.
- Notice that nothing moves.

It is hoped that the children will decide that the objects are dead or that they are part of something that has died. Ask how do we know that they are dead? Encourage words such as "still", "dry" and "not moving".

The Language of Death and Grief

Key Stages 2, 3 and 4

Subjects covered: English Language, PSHE, Art and Design.

Lesson Aim

To get pupils used to discussing death in an open way and to explore why our society has difficulty using the "real" words such as death and dying.

Objectives

Pupils will

1. Explore the word death and the many euphemisms used.
2. Think about what the word means to themselves and to others.
3. Consider why it is difficult to use the "real" words.
4. Consider the origins of these words and phrases.
5. Design and produce a condolence card (extension work)

Time

Approximately 40 minutes (not including design of condolences card).

You Will Need

A selection of condolence cards and/or death notices from a newspaper. (use a national rather than a local one)

A large sheet of paper for pupils to write down words and phrases. One for each pair.

Felt tip pens

The Language of Death

1. Introduce the session by explaining that pupils will be exploring the many words and phrases used rather than the actual words of dead, dying and deceased. Have on display the selection of condolence cards, and/or death notices.
2. Split into pairs and give each pair a large sheet of paper.
3. Pairs to write down all the different words and phrases they find in the cards and obituary notices plus any others of their own that come to mind.
4. Produce a master list that everyone can see.

Putting together a critical incident policy

- A school which takes time to formalise a response before a critical incident or tragedy occurs, will be much better placed to cope should it ever have to be put into practice. However, every school is different and every situation unique. What is deemed appropriate will vary. The policy should be viewed more as a framework to work around rather than something prescriptive.

- Be prepared
- Breaking sad news to staff, pupils and families
- Identify a team, define roles and responsibilities
- Resources
- Support for pupils
- Support for staff
- The first few days
- The funeral
- http://www.childbereavement.org.uk/for_schools/how_to_put_together_a_school_policy

Questions to ask

- How does your school react to a death in the community?
- How do you include 'death' in your subject area?

IB Learner profiles

**Caring
Balanced
Communicator**



Part of the toolkit of life

Let's talk.....about death