

# KinderMourn

## How-to Guide:

### Telling and preparing your child/teen for their first appointment at KinderMourn

First and foremost, thank you for choosing KinderMourn to support your child(ren) as they navigate their grief. We do not take lightly that you have entrusted us to be a part of the healing journey for your child(ren) in the aftermath of death and loss for your family and loved ones.

We recognize that it can be hard to know how to prepare children for what to expect at their first KinderMourn appointment. Therefore, we've provided some important guidance below and encourage you to read it thoroughly in order to best support your child/teen:

- Be **honest** with your child. Let them know that you will be taking them to KinderMourn to meet with a grief counselor. This gives them a chance to mentally prepare as well as openly share any questions or concerns they might have with you.
  - For older children and teens (ages 8-18): we recommend giving them advance notice, which means telling them **at least one week before** their appointment, and then reminding them again the day of their appointment.
  - For young children (ages 3-7): please tell them **one day before** and remind them again the morning of their appointment.
- Please do **not** be dishonest or vague with your child about where they're going [e.g. telling them that they are going to a doctor's appointment]. Dishonesty can cause confusion, mistrust, and anxiety when they arrive at KinderMourn only to find out they are not at the doctor. Extremely vague language like "you're going to an appointment" can also cause confusion and increase their anxiety. **It is very important for children to be told directly and honestly where and why they are going prior to coming to see us at KinderMourn for the first time.**
- The following are examples of how to explain a first visit to KinderMourn:
  - **For older children and teens:** *"KinderMourn is a place for children/teens to meet with grief counselors (helpers) after someone they love has died\*. You will be going to KinderMourn to meet with \_\_\_\_\_ (insert counselor's name) on \_\_\_\_\_ (insert date and time). You will talk/play with them for about an hour. You can choose to share as much or as little as you'd like about \_\_\_\_\_ (insert name of loved one who died). You will **not** be forced to talk about anything that you're not comfortable talking about. I'll be waiting for you in lobby while you talk to \_\_\_\_\_ (insert counselor's name)."*
  - **For young children coming for play therapy:** *"When things are difficult after someone you love has died\*, it helps to have a special time and place to play. Tomorrow, you will go play in a playroom with \_\_\_\_\_ (insert counselor's name). You can decide what you play with and how you play during your time together with \_\_\_\_\_ (insert counselor's name). I'll be right outside waiting for you in the lobby while you play."*  
**\*Please note: it is important for children and teens to know that their loved one has died before bringing them to KinderMourn for their first appointment. If you need guidance on how to share that a loved one has died with your child, please let us know.**
- For young children who may not understand what a "counselor" does, we recommend the book [The Rabbit Listened](#) as a great way to explain their role: the job of a counselor is to be like the rabbit in the story.