

— TALKING ABOUT CANUCK PLACE CHILDREN'S HOSPICE WITH YOUR STUDENTS —

FOR TEACHERS

Canuck Place Children's Hospice (CPCH) is British Columbia's pediatric palliative care provider. Over 830 children living with life-threatening illnesses and families receive care from CPCH through outreach programs and two provincial hospice locations: Vancouver and Abbotsford.

Services include medical respite and family support, pain and symptom management, 24-hour phone consultation support and in-house clinical care, music, art and recreation therapy, education, grief, loss and bereavement counselling and end-of-life care.

Through the investment of the community, our talented team, and over 800 energetic volunteers we make a lasting difference in the lives of children and the families who love them.



FOR TEACHERS TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS

Canuck Place looks after children who live with very serious illnesses from across BC. The house has been designed to be very comfortable, so that when families come to stay they feel like they are in their own home. It is a place where the whole family can come for support; moms, dads, brothers, sisters, grandparents come to stay on a special floor for the family. Children who need care may come to visit many times a year, over many years, while they live with their illness or condition.

There are people who are trained in special care that work at the hospice: Counsellors, music therapist, doctors, nurses, recreation therapists, housekeepers, chefs and even volunteers who share their time to help too. Sometimes kids want to stay at home, so nurses from Canuck Place go to their house to look after them and help their moms and dads.



There are rooms in the house to play also. There is a room with musical instruments, a padded volcano room, a room with fun lights called the Snoezelen Room, an art room and a play room. There is a playground outside and a magical garden walk. These spaces are important because kids come to stay in the house and kids love to play.

There is a school room at Canuck Place and a fabulous teacher. There is a kitchen like you may have at home and it even has a cookie jar. All the families and kids staying in house can come to eat together in the kitchen.



The most important thing is that the kids who are very ill have everything they need to support them and that their mom, dad and siblings have support too. That is what Canuck Place is for. Canuck Place relies on donors to provide this special pediatric palliative care.

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NOTES ON TALKING ABOUT DEATH:

Between the ages of five and nine, most children are beginning to realize that death is final and that all living things die, but still they do not see death as personal. They harbour the idea that somehow they can escape through their own ingenuity and efforts.

During this stage, children also tend to personify death.

They may associate death with a skeleton or the angel of death, and some children have nightmares about them.

They may also overestimate their own power to cause death and they may think that death is contagious. *"If I play with Nancy now that her mother died, my mother may die, too."* They don't know what to say or what to do. In some ways, when someone we love dies, we adults become a lot like 6-9 year olds!

6-9 years old:

- Personifies death: a person, monster who takes you away
- Sometimes a violent thing
- Still has magical thinking, yet begins to see death as final, but outside the realm of the child's realistic mind
- Fails to accept that death will happen to them - or to anyone (although begins to suspect that it will)
- Fears that death is something contagious
- Confusion of wording (soul/sole, dead body, live soul)
- Develops an interest in the causes of death (violence, old age, sickness)

What you can do:

- Ask the child what they understand already
- Involve the child as much as possible to let them know what is happening (end of life celebrations, tributes, where and when)
- Be honest. Use words such as dead and died
- Explain that they will have feelings and that other children their age have similar feelings
- Talk about fears

Death is:

- When people die, all their body parts stop working
- They don't feel or think anymore
- They don't hurt. They don't breathe in and out. They don't eat anymore and they don't go to the bathroom. They are not sad or scared or happy – they are dead
- Dead is not at all like sleeping. They don't wake up. When you sleep all your parts work. Everything that lives must die at some time
- Leaves die in autumn and fall from the trees. Animals live a while and then they die. Usually people live a long time. Sometimes things happen and people die and it feels sudden.