

# How to Explain Cremation to a Child: 3 Things to Say When You Don't Know What to Say

Understanding the cremation process can be difficult for anybody but especially overwhelming for children. Here's how to explain cremation to a child.

As of 2016, [over 50%](#) of US adults chose cremation over burial for their preferred method of final disposition. In other words, cremation is becoming a more commonly chosen option now than ever before.

Children are typically acquainted with the concept of a burial, but cremation may be a more difficult subject for them to grasp. In the midst of their grief, they may also experience fear or distress at the thought of cremation.

If you're wondering how to explain cremation to a child, we're here to help.

Read on to find out three things you can say to start a calm and comforting discussion about death and cremation with your little ones.

## **What Happens During a Cremation?**

In order to explain cremation to a child, you'll need to understand it yourself.

A crematory or crematorium is the building in which cremation takes place. Inside of it is a cremation chamber or retort, a large vault-like object made of stainless steel.

The body is placed in a box made of durable cardboard or a casket and slid into the cremation chamber. A door is then shut and sealed, and the heat is turned on.

The heat used during cremation is in the form of a gas that comes from a jet within the cremation chamber. This gas is hot enough to ignite the body. Over 2-3 hours, the body is almost entirely reduced to a sand-like substance.

Alternatively, green crematoriums may use a flame or water to achieve the same end result.

After removal from the cremation chamber, there may be a few bone fragments left. To make sure that everything is fully reduced, the remains are placed in a processor. Once everything is brought to a sand-like substance (which we call "ashes"), they are sealed in a marked container for the family to collect.

## **1. "It Isn't Painful"**

Death can be a confusing subject for children, especially if they've never lost a loved one before. They may have a hard time understanding that in death, there is a separation of the physical body and the spirit or soul of the person who has passed.

Without understanding this separation, children may fear that the cremation process could cause their loved one pain. While you may not want to explain, step by step, how cremation works, you should explain that as their loved one's body is turned to ash, they will experience no pain at all.

## 2. "The People Who Perform Cremations Are Very Smart and Careful"

To make the cremation more tangible to children, talk to them about crematory operators. They may be used to hearing about their loved one's doctors and other caretakers at this point. Framing the crematory operator as a caretaker may help them to feel more comfortable about what is going to happen.

Crematory operators go through [special training](#) and must receive updated certification in order to operate the cremation chamber. Many of them receive their certification through the Cremation Association of North America or similar programs. This means that they've not only attended classes but have also taken and passed tests.

It is often expected the crematory operators renew their certification every five years. That means that they're up to date on the newest and safest procedures.

Reassure your child that their loved one is in good hands and that nothing bad will happen. The [people in charge](#) care deeply about their role in this process and will take great care when handling the cremation process.

## 3. "It's Okay to Ask Questions"

What's the best thing you can do when navigating how to explain cremation to a child? Encourage them to ask questions.

Children are good at guiding their parents and caretakers towards a level of sharing that is appropriate. If they don't ask, for example, exactly how cremation works, then it is probably okay that you don't tell them. However, if they want to know, do your best to explain it to them calmly.

In the event that they *do* ask how cremation works, we have a few child-friendly tips for talking about the details of cremation with children.

Explain that the heat is very high, about three or four times hotter than an oven at home can get. However, there won't be any smoke or any smell.

Ashes look like bigger pieces of sand, but they're white instead of yellow. That's because our bones are white.

Cremation has been around [for thousands of years](#), but now, we have better methods. Even though burial was a more common tradition in the US for a long time, cremation is actually an age-old part of human history.

If you're speaking with older or more emotionally mature kids, you may consider explaining that buried bodies will also break down and that it will take a lot longer. Your loved one may have chosen cremation because they felt it was a more dignified alternative to burial or because it is better for the environment.

## Be Open to Learning How to Explain Cremation to a Child

When you're in the midst of planning a memorial service, you have a lot on your plate. Dealing with the details and making time and space for your own grief can be difficult enough. Walking a child through this process and learning how to explain cremation to a child may feel next to impossible.

However, with calmness and care, you can have this important discussion with your child. When they understand what's going on, they will feel more comfortable with this transition and less frightened or distressed.

At Green Cremation Texas, we care about every member of your family as well as the environment. If you're looking for a green alternative to burial or standard cremation practices, [contact us](#) today.