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## Reading, Writing, 'rithmetic... And Death?

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Reviewed by John M. Grohol, Psy.D. on December 6, 2010

A new study of children's attitudes in Spain recommends including the topic of death in schools' educational curriculum and finds that people with a university degree fear death less than those with less education.

In addition, fear of death is most common among women than men, which may affect their children's perception of death. In the study, 76 percent of children report fear of death is due to their mothers avoiding the topic.

And more of these children fear early death and adopt maladaptive approaches when it comes to dealing with death.

For this study, conducted at the University of Granada in Spain, researchers used a sample of 288 children, aged between 8 and 12, as well as their parents, tutors and teachers. Researchers analyzed how adults' concept of death affected children's attitudes, fears, beliefs and approaches to death.

This study revealed the need for a change in mentality within families and at school, regarding death and the end of life. The reason is that an appropriate approach to death is key to children's health and personality.

For teachers, 80 percent reported that death was not included in their curriculum. Six out of ten acknowledged that they have occasionally talked about death with their students, mostly in the wake of the death of a student's relative.

In light of their findings, University of Granada researchers consider it essential to provide death education "as a way to value life, and an instrument to end misguided and unreal ideas transmitted by the media. Such education would provide children with the appropriate strategies and resources to approach death during their lives, avoiding any slight or severe negative impact on their physical or psychological health."

Another finding was that a higher educational level prevents negative attitudes, such as fear of death and avoiding the topic.

In accordance with the teachers who participated in the study, "at present, the education system does not have any formal and systematic method to deal with death in class. If death were introduced in the education system, children would have a more real and intense approach to life, and many of the problems derived from the mourning process in adulthood would be prevented."

Source: [University of Granada](#)

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Site last updated: 9 Dec 2010

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