

No easy way to say it

COMMENTARY

By Joe Shearer

I just did the single most difficult thing I've done in my entire life.

I told my son that his Mamaw passed away.

My mother-in-law babysat Riley and Jenna the first few years of their lives while we worked. The two of them were crazy about her.

Linda's first heart surgery was on Riley's birthday this past February. She passed in October, during her sixth procedure. She was only 57.

Each time she went into the hospital we talked about how Mamaw's heart was broken and needed to be fixed, and Riley understood.

We'd hoped each operation would allow her to recover enough to spend that time with them again.

This summer, she broke down, scared that Mason didn't know her. She wanted to start watching them again. At the time we told her it was silly and he'll grow to love her like the others, and that she could watch them when she was feeling better.

She died at 3:30 a.m. We got home at 7. Riley was awake. When I opened my mouth no sound came out. Crystal was a complete wreck but somehow summoned the courage to speak.

Finally, she told Riley that Mamaw is in heaven, and he asked why. I came over to him. I could see he was confused, and soon he was crying.

It makes me sad now that she will be proven right. Mason will never really know her, and as the kids grow their memories of her will fade. It makes me sad that one day Mason will look at a picture of her and ask who she is.

I think now he understands that Mamaw is gone and won't be back. Last night, at dinner he broke down crying. Jenna, who is 2, has started asking to see Mamaw.

How the hell am I supposed to explain it to her.



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