



Tides™



A SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR
GRIEVING CHILDREN, TEENS, AND
THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE THEM.

developmental stages of grief _____
and how caregivers can help

The following chart shows a general list of concepts and responses children have to death and how parents and other caretakers can help them. This list is not inclusive and is generalized to age group. It is important to note that every child grieves differently and has their own understanding and response to the death of a loved one.

Age Group	Concept of Death	Common Responses to Death	Ways to Help
Birth – 2 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not understand that death is permanent and universal • Highly sensitive to change and disruption in their routine and environment • Can sense their caregivers' emotions and distress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritability, change in sleep, eating and play patterns • Regressive behavior • Searching for caregiver • Attached to remaining caregiver and fear separation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide nurturing, love and physical closeness • Language holds a special appeal for children this age; they love to hear familiar voices repeating familiar words and phrases • Maintain a schedule/routine as much as possible • Take child to a portion of funeral or service • Use appropriate vocabulary for age ("Mommy is dead, she is not coming back.")
3 – 6 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have concept of death, depending upon the experience • Death may be caused by thoughts or feelings (Magical Thinking) • May be interested in physical and biological aspects of death and the dead body • May think death is like sleep • Senses caregiver's emotional distress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May appear fine • Irritability, change in sleep, eating and play patterns • Regressive behavior • Concerned with who will be their caregiver • Shows feelings and thoughts through play • Attached to remaining caregiver and fear separation • May ask questions repeatedly • Very curious • Physical reactions and acting out behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer questions • Maintain a schedule as much as possible • Take child to a portion of the funeral/service • Use appropriate vocabulary for age • Provide play opportunities • Model/encourage appropriate expression of feelings and memory sharing

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Age Group	Concept of Death	Common Responses to Death	Ways to Help
7 – 12 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to understand the finality of death • May be interested in physical and biological aspects of death • May feel that he caused death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May appear fine • Irritability, change in sleep, eating and play patterns • Regressive behavior • Concerned with who will be their caregiver • Feels a stigma at school or around peers • Attached to remaining caregiver and fear separation • Concerned about future of self and others • Very curious • Physical reactions and acting out behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer questions • Maintain a schedule as much as possible • Include child in funeral/service • Use appropriate vocabulary for age • Be honest and factual • Provide play opportunities • Model/encourage appropriate expression of feelings and memory sharing • Keep in contact with school
Teens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death is final, an end to physical life • Realization of own mortality and thinks about the meaning of life • May be interested in physical and biological aspects of death • May feel that he/she caused death • Understands future and what loss will mean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May appear fine • Irritability, change in sleep, eating, school and social behaviors • Concerned with who will be their caregiver • Feels stigma at school or around peers • Attached to remaining caregiver/family • Concerned about the future of self or others • Attempt to take on role of deceased • Struggles with needing support and not wanting it • Difficulty concentrating • Physical reactions and acting out behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer questions • Maintain a schedule as much as possible • Include adolescent in funeral/service • Be available when teen wants to talk • Be honest and factual • Reduce expectations • Model/encourage appropriate expression of feelings and memory sharing • Keep in contact with school