



Amaranth Foundation

Yes...Children Grieve

*The following information was sourced from
<https://kidsaid.com/dougypage.html>*

It is believed that infants grieve. If there are people who have been consistently present in a baby's life, the child will have a sense of something missing.

A young child often does not initially respond to hearing that someone has died. Many parents are concerned that their child has no initial reaction or visible grief.

It is important to remember that a young child's perception is oriented in the five basic senses. It is concrete, short-range and based on what is felt in the moment.

A young child does not comprehend the concept of death. A person is gone; then a person is there. When a person is gone and then still gone and then still gone, a child may grieve at each moment when he or she feels the person's goneness.

A child may not grieve at all for these leavings until the accumulative affect of goneness inspires a longing or aching protest within the child.

The child will miss the specific elements of the person: sound of voice, expression, smell, activities experienced together. A child's missing of the person who has died will not necessarily be as a result of hearing that that person is dead.

Very young children may grieve a specific person. The primary care giver is most missed by young children: smell, voice, rhythm, etc.

Young children also mourn the loss of secondary people in their lives such as other family members and persons with whom the child spends large amounts of time.

Children Are Concrete in Their Thinking

In order to lessen confusion use the words death and dying. Describe death concretely. Answer their questions simply and honestly, not using euphemisms such as passed on,

went to sleep, etc. You don't have to add a large number of details. Children will ask if they want to know more. You can see if they are listening because they want to or for your benefit (agitated, fidgety, little or no eye contact).

Children Generalize—Specific to General

If someone died in a hospital, children think that hospitals are for dying. If someone died in their sleep, children are afraid to go to sleep. If one person died they may think, "someone (or everyone) else will die" or "I will die." They will learn to accommodate new truths on their own if they are allowed to express themselves and try things out (such as going to sleep and waking up alive).

Children Are Repetitive in Their Grief

Children may ask questions repetitively. The answers often do not resolve their searching. The searching itself is part of their grief work. Their questions are indicative of their feelings of confusion and uncertainty. Listen and support their searching. Answer repetitively. You may have to tell the story over and over and over again.

Children Are Physical in Their Grief

The older children are, the more capable they are of expressing themselves in words. Younger children simply are their feelings. What they do with their bodies speaks their feelings. Grief is a physical experience for all ages, and most especially for younger children. Movement and active play yield communication. Watch their bodies and understand their play as their language of

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Yes ...Children Grieve cont.

grief.

Reflect their play verbally and physically as a way of supporting their communication. Thus, they will feel that they are being heard, and they may feel like continuing to communicate in this way with you. Example: "You are bouncing, bouncing, bouncing on those pillows; your face is red, and you are yelling loudly."

Abstract Thinking

As children become older, they begin to grasp the concept of death. Their "death data bank" grows. They will begin to understand that the person will never come back because he or she is "dead," and dead begins to take on meaning.

Abstract thinking develops more in-depth with the onset of adolescence. Sometimes a death will lead adolescents into philosophic pondering, sometimes appearing like depression, as they investigate the meaning of the event that has occurred. Questions might arise, such as: What is life? What is death? Who am I?

Children Grieve Cyclically

Their grief work goes in cycles throughout their childhood and life. Each time they reach a new developmental level they reintegrate the important events of their lives, using their newly acquired processes and skills.

Example: A one-year old upon losing her mother will become absorbed in the death again when her language skills develop and as she is able to use words for the expression of her feelings. She may re-experience the grief again as an adolescent, using her newly acquired cognitive skills of abstract thinking.

Children Need Choices

Death is a disruption in children's lives that is quite frightening. Their lives will probably seem un-dependable, unstable, confusing and out of control. These topsy turvy feelings can be smoothed if children have some say in what they do or don't do to memorialize the person who died and to express their feelings about the death. Whenever possible, children should be offered choices about going to the hospital, viewing the body, attending the funeral, etc. Children often appreciate being offered pictures and possessions of the deceased person as a way of supporting their grieving process. Allow them to have clothing of the person, to play with the toys or objects and to have pictures. Let them choose what they want and what to do with them. The grieving child may assume qualities of the dead person as a way of keeping a sense of that person alive. Mannerisms and symptoms of the deceased person may appear.

Children Grieve as Part of a Family

When a family member dies, it will affect the way the family functions as a whole. All the relationships within the family may shift, adjusting to this change in the family structure.

Children may mourn the person who died and the environment in the family that existed before the death. Children may grieve the changed behavior of family and friends. It is helpful if each family member is encouraged to grieve in his/her own way, with support for individual differences. Family members are given permission to see each other's mourning, if possible. It's important not to shield children from emotions. Offering them the option to be alone or with others will facilitate their feeling of being included and give them permission to be with their feelings as well.

A Child's Feelings

Children's feelings are their allies. Feelings help children to pay attention to their loss. Through this attention comes their own understanding about the death they are grieving. A young child does not understand the abstract concept of death. But a child does have feelings that most often are expressed through behavior (e.g. play, acting out) or questions that show a search for meaning.

Anger

There are different kinds of anger expressed in grieving. There may be unresolved issues between a child and the person who died, which can result in anger in the child. There may be anger in a child as a protest against the fact of the death and the lack of dependability of life.

Anger can also be an antidote to fear, manifesting in an outward display of personal power. A child may communicate through anger: "I am strong enough to control life with my force." A child may become rebellious or resistant to counteract the vulnerability of feeling fear and sorrow.

Sorrow

When a child feels sorrow, he or she may be ready to accept the truth of the loss without protest. Sorrow can be an expression of a child's feelings of vulnerability as he or she continues to live without the person who died. The child may grieve a loss of security. Loving arms around a child who cries with sorrow can offer safety and acceptance in a world that includes the dying of those we love.

Acceptance

It is our experience that we do not "get over" an important death in our lives. We learn to live with it, accept it and go on with our lives to create joy in living. Gentle acknowledgment of the ones who have died gives depth throughout our lives to the picture of our experience of life and death.

Developmental Phases and Grieving

It is important to recognize that all children are unique in their understanding of death and dying. This understanding depends on their developmental level, cognitive skills, personality characteristics, religious or spiritual beliefs, teachings by parents and significant others, input from the media, and previous experiences with death. Nonetheless, there are some general considerations that will be helpful in understanding how children and adolescents experience and deal with death.

Infants and Toddlers:

The youngest children may perceive that adults are sad, but have no real understanding of the meaning or significance of death.

Preschoolers:

Young children may deny death as a formal event and may see death as reversible. They may interpret death as a separation, not a permanent condition. Preschool and even early elementary children may link certain events and magical thinking with the causes of death. For instance, as a result of the World Trade Center disaster, some children may imagine that going into tall buildings may cause someone's death.

Early Elementary School:

Children at this age (approximately 5-9) start to comprehend the finality of death. They begin to understand that certain circumstances may result in death. They can see that, if large planes crash into buildings, people in the planes and buildings will be killed. In case of war images, young children may not be able to differentiate between what they see on television, and what might happen in their own neighborhood. However, they may over-generalize, particularly at ages 5-6—if jet planes don't fly, then people don't die. At this age, death is perceived as something that happens to others, not to oneself or one's family.

Middle School:

Children at this level have the cognitive understanding to comprehend death as a final event that results in the cessation of all bodily functions. They may not fully grasp the abstract concepts discussed by adults or on the TV news but are likely to be guided in their thinking by a concrete understanding of justice. They may experience a variety of feelings and emotions, and their expressions may include acting out or self-injurious behaviors as a means of coping with their anger, vengeance and despair.

High School:

Most teens will fully grasp the meaning of death in circumstances such as an automobile accident, illness and even the

[major] disasters. They may seek out friends and family for comfort or they may withdraw to deal with their grief.

Teens (as well as some younger children) with a history of depression, suicidal behavior and chemical dependency are at particular risk for prolonged and serious grief reactions and may need more careful attention from home and school during these difficult times.

Tips to support children & teens with grieving friends

- Seeing their [friends] reactions to loss may bring about some fears of losing their own parents or siblings, particularly for students who have family in the military or other risk related professions. They need reassurance from caregivers that their own families are safe. For children who have experienced their own loss (previous death of a parent, grandparent, sibling), observing the grief of a friend can bring back painful memories.
- Children (and many adults) need help in communicating condolence or comfort messages. Provide children with age-appropriate guidance for supporting their peers. Help them decide what to say (e.g., "Steve, I am so sorry about your father. I know you will miss him very much. Let me know if I can help you with your paper route....")
- Help children anticipate some changes in friends' behavior. Let them know that their grieving friends may act differently, may withdraw from their friends for a while, might seem angry or very sad, etc., but that this does not mean a lasting change in their relationship.
- Explain that their "regular" friendship may be an important source of support for friends and classmates. Even normal social activities such as inviting a friend over to play, going to the park, playing sports, watching a movie, or a trip to the mall may offer a much needed distraction and sense of connection and normalcy.
- Children need to have some options for providing support—it will help them deal with their fears and concerns if they have some concrete actions that they can take to help. Suggest making cards, drawings, helping with chores or homework, etc. Older teens might offer to help the family with some shopping, cleaning, errands, etc., or with babysitting for younger children.
- Encourage children who are worried about a friend to talk to a caring adult. This can help alleviate their own concern or potential sense of responsibility for making their friend feel better. Children may also share important information about a friend who is at risk of more serious grief reactions.

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/griefwar.pdf

“HOW PEOPLE *Live* MATTERS”

... it really does.

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When do Children Grieve? ...

when they lose something that is important to them...
for example:-

- their comforter
- their sense of routine
- their sense of security
- when a parent goes away
- when they lose a friend or friendship
 - loss of a pet
 - moving house
 - being in hospital
 - changing schools
- when parents separate
- when a family breaks up
- moving to a new country
- death of a grandparent
- having a disability

Watermelon Ice, frozen fruit treats and fruit skewers

INGREDIENTS

- 1 watermelon, rind removed
- handful of mint leaves, finely chopped

METHOD

- cut the watermelon into large slices, removing the pips as you go
- blend 2/3 of the watermelon in a blender or food processor, into a puree
- roughly mash the remaining watermelon with the back of a fork
- mix together with the mint and place in freezer containers
- place in the freezer overnight

- before serving, rough up the watermelon ice with a fork.
- serve in small cups.



- Frozen fruit treats, such as frozen banana (spear peeled banana with icy-pole stick and then freeze) or other frozen fruit such as grapes, peeled mango cheeks, peeled orange and mandarin segments, are also a great alternative to ice-creams in summer.
- Thread a selection of fruit pieces onto half a wooden skewer ; serve with a bowl of yoghurt or fromage frais to dip the 'kebabs' into.

<http://www.lifestylefood.com.au/recipes/11065/watermelon-ice>