

# Grief Reactions by Ages



The way a child shows grief changes according to his or her age. You will also find that a child grows older, his or her awareness of a loved one's death changes. It is normal for a child to re-grieve the loss of a loved one as the awareness of the death changes. Common grief reactions by age appear below:

## Ages 3-6

- May ask questions about the loved one e.g. How does \_\_\_\_\_ eat, play, or breathe?
- May question who will care for them.
- May worry that death will occur to someone else they love.
- May search for their loved one by watching video clips or by looking at pictures.
- May experience problems with eating, sleeping, bowel/bladder functions .

## Ages 6-9

- Curious about death and may ask questions about what happens to their loved one's body.
- May view death as punishment because of their misbehavior or bad thoughts.
- May be afraid to go to school or have difficulty concentrating.
- Boys may become more aggressive.
- Girls may become more withdrawn.
- May become overly concerned about their health and the health of those caring for them.
- May feel need to assume adult roles before they are ready, especially in cases of parental death.

## Ages 9-12

- Views death as final and something that happens to everyone, especially the "old".
- Death is not viewed as a form of punishment.
- Reactions reflect what they have learned from parents and adults in their lives.
- At risk for symptoms of depression, withdrawal, anxiety, outbursts, and changes in school work
- Will often display empathy and will share expressions of care to others who are grieving.

## Teens

- Has understanding of death and views death as permanent.
- May be angry that the death is interfering with their schedule or activities.
- May feel isolated from those who have not experienced a death.
- At risk for substance abuse and risk-taking behaviors.

If your child needs additional support, please contact  
FAIRHOPE's Family Grief Support Coordinator at 740-654-7077.



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