



Normal Grief Reactions – Kids & Teens

Age 0-2 Years Old

- Do not understand the finality of death
- Increased irritability & crying
- Change eating patterns
- Change sleeping patterns
- Can become detached

Age 2-5 Years Old

- Do not understand the finality of death & may ask questions over and over
- Confused & believe death is reversible
- Lack words to express grief
- Act out feelings in behavior & play
- Experience separation anxiety even after
- Experience nightmares
- Display regressive behaviors (toilet training, thumb sucking, bed wetting)

Age 6-9 Years Old

- Begin to understand finality of death
- Believe death only happens to others
- Personify death as ghosts or monsters
- Engage in magical thinking, and may feel they caused death
- Have strong feelings of grief and loss, expressed more through anger
- Lack words to express grief
- Often need permission to grieve, especially boys

Age 9-12 Years Old

- Understand finality of death
- Experience difficulty concentrating
- Have curiosity about the physical aspects of death
- May identify with deceased by imitating mannerisms
- Have vocabulary to express grief, but often choose not to
- Need encouragement to express feelings and grieve



Age 13-23 Years Old (Adolescents)

- Have an adult understanding of death
- Philosophize about life and death & search for meaning of death and life
- Can express grief, but often choose not to
- Affects entire life – school, home, relationships
- May appear to be coping well when they are not
- Are often thrust into role of comforter
- Participate in dangerous behavior like drugs and alcohol or reckless driving

Adapted from Children & Grief: When a parent dies por J. William Worden, Ph.D. y A Student Dies, A School Mourns por Ralph L. Klicker