



## How Parents Can Help Children/Teens to Cope With Loss and Grief

### What Is Grief

Grief is the term used for the many feelings and behaviors we experience when we are faced with loss. The loss may be from the death of a significant other, relocation, or divorce. Grief is a normal reaction to loss and change. Children **do** experience grief as they have feelings and are aware of losses. However, children grieve differently based upon age and personality.

### What Are Some of the Feelings Children May Have

Children may have one or more of these feelings: abandonment or the feeling of being left alone, anxiety, confusion, anger, guilt, fear, body distress, rejection, sadness, and panic. It is important to help children identify, label, and talk about these different feelings.

### What Is the Effect of Age on Children Who Are Grieving

Children's development and age will have an impact on how they think about death and the loss.

Age	Reaction
Infants and young children (0 - 2 years)	React the way they see their caretakers react. They may resist change and separation from caretakers.
Preschool aged children (3 - 5 years)	Do not accept death as permanent. They will often ask when the deceased person will return. They may react primarily to separation.
Young school-aged children (5 - 9 years)	Accept that death is permanent, but not universal. Questions about why their loved one had to die and not someone else are common.
Older school-aged children (9 -12 years)	See death as permanent and universal. They take death personally and understand they also will die someday. They are interested in concrete details about the death, such as the funeral and burial.
Older children (12 years and older)	Have started to reach an adult understanding of death. They spend a significant amount of time thinking about death and trying to understand what happens after death. They have very intense emotions during this time.

As children go through the different developmental stages, they re-grieve the loss and try to understand their loss in new ways. This can be confusing and difficult for adults.