



Grief

The Facts

Grief is the process of separating from someone or something important to you while holding on to some connection and bond. We may not realize the fact that children are often sheltered from the grieving process. In our heads, we believe kids are not mature enough to handle such matters as death, abandonment, divorce, serious illness, war and violence. Instead of shielding children, let children grieve in order for their wounds to heal. What's important to remember is that every child obtains a different cognitive message and not every child is resilient. With our help, kids can make it through the tough times too!

Signs Of A Child's Grief

Physical symptoms

- Change in eating and sleeping patterns
- Fatigue
- Loss of energy
- Headaches
- Various health concerns

Behavioral symptoms

- Crying
- Low concentration in school and other daily activities
- Urge to be separated and/or alone most of the time
- Mood swings
- Over-dependence on others

Mental symptoms

- Guilt, wishing they would have died
- Shock and numbness
- Sadness
- Fear
- Apathy
- Disorientation
- Anger
- Depression



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How To Respond To Fears/Questions

Talking to kids is beneficial in terms of overcoming the grieving process. The following are a few tips for talking with children about a recent tragedy. Overall, responding to their fears, anxiety, feelings and questions will aid in them feeling safe again.

Turn off any distractions

Keeping up with news (news on TV and/or radio) in actuality replays the tragedy for children.

Control your expressions

Expressing all your fears and sadness will make children even more scared. Share only some of your feelings while sharing any tips you may have in dealing with them.

Reassure

Let children know you or another loved one will always be there for them.

Be available and “askable”

During a time of tragedy a child’s greatest need is to feel secure and safe. Having a parent near at all times is close to impossible. Yet, giving them your work number and allowing for them to call whenever they are worried about something or have questions may ease their fears.

Play with your younger children

Though younger children are unable to voice their concern, they may still be fearful or worried about the atmosphere around them. Allow them to express their feelings through play (i.e. puppet shows, drawing and reading).

Get back to your family routine ASAP

Routine is reassuring to children. If your child is out for more than one day due to a tragedy, try to return to the normal schedule as soon as possible.

Where To Go For Help

When coping with grief, community professionals can help.

Who you can turn to:

- School counselors
- Local mental health center
- Psychologist, psychiatrist or social worker in private practice
- Family doctor/pediatrician
- Clergy

Produced by

PARTNERS IN PARENTING (PIP) (800) 457-2736

Colorado Family Education, Resources & Training
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

Funded by the Alcohol & Drug Abuse Division and CSAP

Information for this PIP TIP collected from a variety of research based resources.

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