

## NATURAL GRIEF REACTIONS

### 2-6 year olds

- Changes in eating (loss or increase in appetite)
- Changes in sleeping patterns (inability to sleep/sleeping more)
- Nightmares
- Separation anxiety
- Clinging to parents
- Increased fearfulness
- Grief Bursts- Short periods of sadness with intermittent temper tantrums
- Sadness and Tearfulness
- Magical Thinking
- Engage in reenactments and play about the loss.
- Does not understand the permanence of death.
- Child wants to die to be with loved one
- Child will search for the deceased person.
- Repeated questions about the person who died and the story of their death (Where is Daddy? Can you tell me the story about Joshua again?)
- Denial, shock, confusion
- Physiological complaints: stomach aches and headaches
- Developmental regression (acting younger, reverting to earlier behaviors: e.g. baby talk, thumb sucking or bedwetting)

### 6-12 year olds

- Changes in eating (loss or increase in appetite)
- Changes in sleeping patterns (inability to sleep/sleeping more)
- Nightmares
- Separation anxiety
- Clinging to parents
- Grief Bursts~ Short periods of sadness with intermittent temper tantrums
- Anger (shown as outbursts or by withdrawing from others): at the person who died / at the surviving parent / at doctors and nurses for not saving the person's life / at God, self, and life.
- Sadness and Tearfulness
- Magical Thinking
- Engage in reenactments and play about the loss.
- Difficulty or unwillingness to 'talk' about the deceased or their story.
- Understands the permanence of death.
- Child wants to die to be with loved one.
- Child will search for the deceased person.
- Inventing games about dying and the deceased person.
- Denial, shock, confusion
- Physiological complaints: stomach aches, headaches, difficulty concentrating
- Attention seeking behavior (does anyone see how much pain I'm in?)
- Increased Fearfulness (of being alone / of the other parent, sibling, loved one dying too / that they will die / hospitals and doctors / getting too close to others who may die)
- Questions. Lots of questions. (the 'concrete thinker')
- School (underachieving or overachieving)
- Give up a favorite activity or loss of interest in daily activities or events.
- Withdrawal from friends
- Play continues to be the primary method of expression (e.g. drawing, games, crafts, expressive art and lots of physical activity)
- Developmental regression (acting younger, reverting to earlier behaviors: e.g. baby talk, thumb sucking or bedwetting)

## NATURAL GRIEF REACTIONS

### ADOLESCENCE (13-18)

- Changes in eating (loss or increase in appetite)
- Changes in sleeping patterns (inability to sleep or sleeping more)
- Extreme mood swings: highly emotional to apparently unaffected
- Withdrawal or the desire to be with friends more often
- A greater awareness of self~ wanting to be in a support group or talk with someone individually or the desire to only talk with their friends or family.
- Wanting to die to be with loved one.
- Risky behavior (Does anyone see how much pain I'm in?)
- Guilt (over the failure to prevent the loss / that they caused the illness, tragedy or death / that they could not save the person from dying / that they are having fun while someone else is sick, dying or dead)
- Physiological complaints: stomach aches, headaches, difficulty concentrating and making decisions.
- School (underachieving or overachieving)
- Give up a favorite activity or loss of interest in daily activities or events.
- Nightmares
- Grief Bursts~ Short periods of sadness with intermittent bursts of grief (often 'out of the blue')
- Sadness and Tearfulness
- Denial, shock, confusion
- Anger (shown as outbursts or by withdrawing from others): at the person who died / at the surviving parent / at doctors and nurses for not saving the person's life / at God, self, and life.
- Difficulty or unwillingness to 'talk' about the deceased or their story.
- Increased Fearfulness (of being alone / of the other parent, sibling, loved one dying too / that they will die / hospitals and doctors / getting too close to others who may die)
- Questions. Lots of questions. (the 'concrete thinker')
- Play continues to be the primary method of expression, especially with Teens (e.g. wanting to be with peers instead of at home, athletics, music, expressive arts, drawing, other)
- Developmental regression

### YOUNG ADULTS (18 - 29)

- Will mom/dad/family be okay?
- Will I be next? Concern for own mortality.
- Retells events of the deceased's illness and death.
- Maybe I should move back home—they need me to take care of them now.
- Will I have to drop out of school or quit my job?
- Dreams of deceased.
- Feels as though the deceased is with them in some way.
- Now I won't get to know mom/dad/brother/sister as an adult, grow old together.
- Who am I without my loved one in my life?
- May seek out someone who has experienced death and form relationship.
- I feel so alone.
- What kind of relationship will I have with surviving family members?
- I don't feel connected, can't go home—it's not the same.
- I can't concentrate—can't make classes or go to work.
- Bursts into tears and retreats.
- May present without emotion regarding the loss.
- I feel angry, guilty, hopeless (or any of the grief reactions).
- I miss their phone calls, emails, snail-mail, the communication.
- I miss their support and encouragement.
- I'm not ready to grow up, to be the next generation, only child.
- We were best friends, now we won't share in life rituals and passages, marriage, family rearing, career, etc.
- I can't ask for help. I don't want them to worry about me.
- I feel numb.
- I feel unable to carry on with normal activities.