



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
School Crisis & Bereavement

Supporting the grieving child and family

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www.schoolcrisiscenter.org

Loss is common in the lives of children

- Vast majority of children experience the death of a family member and/or friend by the time they complete high school
- 5% of children experience death of parent by 16

Children may not appear to be grieving

- Adults may communicate death is not discussed
- Children may
 - not yet understand what has happened or its implications
 - be overwhelmed by feelings
 - express grief indirectly through behavior or play

Being with someone in distress

- Do not try to “cheer up” survivors
- Do not encourage to be strong or cover emotions
- Express feelings and demonstrate empathy
- Avoid statements such as: “I know exactly what you are going through” (you can’t), “You must be angry” (don’t tell person how to feel), “Both my parents died when I was your age” (don’t compete for sympathy)
- Allow child/adult to be upset and tolerate unpleasant affect, without trying to change it.

Children's guilt

- Thought processes limited by:
 - Egocentrism
 - Limited understanding of causality
 - Magical thinking
- Results in guilt
 - Reassure children of lack of responsibility

Misconceptions & literal misinterpretations

- For young children, thought processes are concrete and literal
- Religious explanations can be shared, but should not be only explanation of death

www.achildgrief.com

After a Loved One Dies— How Children Grieve

And how parents and other
adults can support them



What's Covered in this Guide

- Helping children, helping the family
- Why a parent's role is important
- Helping children understand death
- How children respond to death
- Attending funerals and memorials
- Helping children cope over time
- Getting help
- Taking care of yourself
- Looking to the future

[Click on the Grief Guide link on the left navigation bar to order product](#)

Adolescent bereavement

- Adults assume that because adolescents have ability to think rationally they need no further explanations
- They assume since adolescents often less amenable to adult guidance, they do not need support
- In reality, adolescents do, but often left unsupported
- Parents often rely on adolescent children to provide comfort and take on adult responsibilities

Provide advice on how to support child

- Funeral attendance
- Be aware of community resources and offer them to families
- Provide follow-up – remember that grieving is long-term

Provide support to providers

- Providers must understand personal feelings about death; will involve awareness of impact of deaths of patients on professional and personal lives
- Death of a patient is one of the most stressful personal and professional experiences
- Permission and tolerance to discuss and have personal needs met regarding bereavement is important, such as through rounds, retreats, and other support services



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September 11th Children's Fund and National Philanthropic Trust
Supplemental support from New York Life Foundation

- Promote appreciation of role schools can serve to support students and staff
- Enhance training in professional education programs
- Serve as resource for information, training materials, consultation and technical assistance

For further information



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www.schoolcrisiscenter.org

www.aap.org/disasters/adjustment.cfm

Partial list of NCSCB resources

- Parent guide on supporting a grieving child (New York Life Foundation)
- Guidelines for addressing death of student or staff in school (separate guidelines for suicide)
- Bereavement training module
- Scholastic webinar
- Psychological first aid
- Guidance on addressing anniversary of crisis in school setting

**Healing is a matter of time,
but it is sometimes also
a matter of opportunity**

**-- Hippocrates
460-400 B.C.**