

## Stages of Grief for Children

### Developmental stages of Grief

Grief is part of everybody's life. It is a natural psychological process. Grief is caused due to feeling of irreparable loss. Such loss could be either physical like death of loved one or social like loss of job opportunity. Everyone has own of expressing emotions. The gravity of the grief depends upon intimacy with the deceased and how fast the loss occurred (whether it was expected or was sudden). Like the way of grieving, the period of grieving also defers from one individual to another.

Children have their own way of thinking about the concept of death. Children from different age groups respond differently to death. Following illustration will provide you brief idea about how children understand the concept of death in their own way and how they respond or conclude aftermaths of death.

Age of children	Conception of Death	Way of expressing their grief/emotions
Children below age of 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ They cannot understand the death</li> <li>○ Separation from loved one (mother) may develop certain changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Crankiness</li> <li>○ Inactiveness or reduced activity</li> <li>○ Quietness</li> <li>○ Sleep problems</li> <li>○ Loss of weight</li> </ul>
Children between age group of 1 years and 6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assume that the loved one is in deep sleep</li> <li>○ The deceased is still live and function in some ways</li> <li>○ Think that death is a temporary condition and it is not an end. Their loved one will get up soon</li> <li>○ Expect the deceased to become alive again</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Makes many queries like how does my mother eat or go to bathroom when she is sleeping?</li> <li>○ Difficulty in sleeping and eating</li> <li>○ Problems in bowel and bladder control</li> <li>○ Tantrums</li> <li>○ Fear of loneliness or abandonment</li> <li>○ Irrelevant thinking such as Did I do or thought something that has caused death of my mother?</li> </ul>
Children between age group of 6 years and 9 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Death is a thought of as a spirit or person (ghost, bogeyman or skeleton)</li> <li>○ Death is frightening and final</li> <li>○ The death has happened to loved ones it should not happen to me</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Asks specific questions</li> <li>○ Curious about the death</li> <li>○ May developed fears about school. Usually these fears are exaggerated</li> <li>○ Display aggressive behavior. This way of expressing grief is more prominent in boys</li> <li>○ Fears about the imaginary sickness</li> <li>○ Feeling of loneliness or abandonment</li> </ul>
Children above age of 9 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Like my loved one has died everyone will die</li> <li>○ Death is inescapable and no one can change it. It is the end.</li> <li>○ Like my loved one I will also die</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Anger, guilt, heightened emotions, shame</li> <li>○ Enhanced anxiety about own death</li> <li>○ Swings in moods</li> <li>○ Feeling/fear of rejection. Not willing to be different from peers</li> <li>○ Changed eating habits</li> <li>○ Sleeping disorders like sleeplessness or interrupted sleep</li> <li>○ Lack of interest in outdoor activities (regressive behavior)</li> <li>○ Impulsive behavior</li> <li>○ Guilty feeling about self liveness. Such way of expressing grief is more in cases where the child has lost one of the parents, sister or brother.</li> </ul>