



GRIEF IN DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

AGES	LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING	REACTIVE BEHAVIORS	NEEDS
2 AND UNDER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can sense that something is different at home. Does not yet understand what death is. Probably won't remember the person who died. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fussiness Clinging to adults Regressive behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-verbal care (such as hugs and rocking) Stable routine
2 – 5 (GREEN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sees death as temporary – believes person will return. Don't fear death, but fear separation. Usually can't comprehend the concepts of heaven, afterlife or soul. Feels sadness, but often periods of grief are interspersed with normal playing behavior. Substitutes attachment from the deceased person to another person. May not remember the person who died. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regression (bed wetting, thumb sucking) Fear of separation Nightmares Aggression Non-compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stable daily routine Structure Honesty, use the words "dead" and "died" Answer to questions honestly but simply Love Reassurance To be heard, so listen
6 – 9 (ORANGE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begins to understand that death is permanent. Develops fear of death and of others dying. May feel guilt and blame self for death; see it as punishment for bad behavior. Magical thinking; may see self as cause of death. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grief ebbs and flows Compulsive care giving Aggression Possessiveness (e.g. of remaining parent) Regression Somatic complaints School phobia Exaggerated fears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to express their feelings (art, writing, etc.) Concrete answers to questions Validation of feelings Love Reassurance that they are not to blame To be heard, so listen
10 – 12 (BLUE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a realistic view of death and its permanence. Asks specific questions about death, the body, etc. Interested in the gory details. Concerned with practical questions. (Who will take care of me? How will my family's life style change? Etc.) Identifies strongly with deceased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upset by the disruption in their lives Blame others for the loss Separation anxiety, some denial and/or guilt Difficulty concentrating Decline in school performance Want to be "fixers" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permission and outlets to express feelings, including anger, relief, sadness, etc. Validation of feelings Offers of support and assistance and to know who can help them to be heard, so listen, listen, and listen
13 – 18 (PURPLE/ TEENS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes that life is fragile; death is inevitable and irreversible. May worry about own death. Often tries not to think or talk about the death. Sometimes hides feelings so as not to look different from peers. Ponders and questions religious and philosophical beliefs. Often angry at the deceased or at people involved in the death (e.g. doctors). Fears the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aggression, anger Possessiveness Somatic complaints Phobias Increased risk taking Promiscuity Increased drug/alcohol use Defiance Delinquent acts Suicidal ideation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A trusted adult or peer for support Parental openness in sharing feelings Help in learning to manage feelings Continued emotional support Presence of parents Encouragement of efforts toward independence