

Kids and Grief

	Ages 0-3	Ages 3-5	Ages 5-8	Ages 9-12	Ages 13-18
<u>Understanding of death:</u>	Infants as young as 4 mo. recognize emotional expressions in others and can feel their parents' grief	Don't understand that death is permanent and irreversible. Prone to "magical thinking"	Begin to understand that death is permanent, but they struggle to understand the "how".	Death is permanent and happens to everyone. May have morbid curiosity, or fears about others dying.	Teens' understanding of and response to death are more similar to an adult's than to children
<u>Grief Manifestation:</u>	Sleep disturbances, explosive emotions, or regressive behavior.	Crying, confusion, and regression	May express anger toward the pet, situation, or even the doctor. May ask many questions about the mechanics of death or body care.	May struggle to express their grief and try to keep their feelings hidden.	May try to avoid talking about grief, leading parents to think grief is not impacting them. Research shows that teens often have more intense grief than other age groups.
<u>How adults can help:</u>	Parents can use soft, reassuring voices and movements to ensure the child feels secure.	Give clear and simple answers to questions, read from books about loss, create a secure environment, and encourage physical expressions such as drawing and playing	Answer questions directly, using the correct language, and let them know it's okay to feel the emotions they're feeling. Encourage play, drawing, and stories to express grief.	Parents should facilitate honest conversations, role model talking about grief, and ask children questions about their grief.	Encourage open discussions, create opportunities to memorialize and express grief in non-verbal ways, and encourage teens to play an active role in the family's grief process.

