



A Childs Grieve

Grieving takes people through many different emotions; the grieving process will take its natural course. It is accepted that when we grieve we may go through several different stages, though we can move backwards and forwards through them, or perhaps not go through all of them. These are:

- accepting the reality of the loss;
- experiencing the pain of grief;
- adjusting to the changes that have occurred; and
- being able to invest in new relationships.

The grieving process for any loss can be the most difficult and painful stage to go through and a wide range of feelings and behaviours may occur, not always in any predictable order. Grieving can cover a wide variety of feelings.

Feeling	What do children need?
<p>Anxiety If a child loses someone on whom they are largely dependent for their wellbeing they can experience strong feelings of insecurity and anxiety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassurance that their world has not disintegrated. • Information or honest answers to their questions. • Patience and support from the people around them. • Time to adjust to a new way of life. • Routines and stability at home and school. • Language which is straightforward and easily understood. • Time to accept their emotions as well as time to express them.
<p>Anger Feelings of anger are often experienced by children and young people after a loss and this can be externally directed or directed on themselves. Managing their feelings of anger can be particularly frightening for children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A safe place to express their anger and confusion. • Adults who are prepared to listen and who acknowledge their grief. • Reassurance that they were not responsible for what happened. • Time to adjust to what has happened. • Familiar routines and life styles. • Adults who will admit they don't know all the answers.
<p>Denial & disbelief Such feelings often occur immediately when bad news is given such as the death of a significant person. Feelings of numbness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be told the facts about what has happened as clearly and concisely as possible and in language they understand. • Familiar routines and safe surroundings.

<p>can be an initial defence mechanism to protect the child from the emotional trauma they are experiencing. Shock and numbness may last for several hours before reality breaks through.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who will help to keep the memory of the person 'alive'. • To be allowed to express their responses in a way which is right for them as long as they are not endangering themselves or anyone else.
<p>Strong visual association & sleep disturbance Research suggests that in experiencing emotional trauma sensory impressions can be more powerful and, particularly where language development is not complete, powerful sensory images may be associated with the trauma. Strong visual images may recur particularly at night. Sleep disturbances can also be triggered by adults euphemistically referring to death as sleep.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language that describes death in a way that is understood. • Reassurance that they are 'safe' as they sleep. • Opportunities to act out or role-play their anxieties or experiences. • Information and honest answers to their questions.
<p>Sadness & longing Such feelings may last for only a short period but they can be very intense and painful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 'safe' place to express their emotions. • Opportunities to role-play their experiences and emotions. • Continuity in care at home and at school. • Adults who will comfort them and help them express how they feel.
<p>Children can sometimes experience feelings of guilt & self-blame</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassurance that they were not to blame either through thought or neglect. • Time to adjust to what has happened. • Opportunities to express their anxiety, for example through counselling or therapy. • Opportunities to give a 'last message' to say what they would like to have told the deceased person before they died, to 'repair' something they wish they hadn't said etc.