



Grief: Symptoms and Tips

Bereavement and grief refer to the loss of someone significant to a person. Children and youth can experience grief over the loss of pet, a toy, a home, or even loss of an ability or former activity. The assumptions of loss and what might be lost or gone can traumatize as much as an actual loss.

What are the symptoms of childhood and teen stress?

- Short bursts of crying, anger, questions, or jovialness
- Agitation and restlessness or disturbed sleep
- Increased clinginess or withdrawal
- Fear of separation
- Increased feelings of illness
- Periods of sadness, guilt, denial, anger, or acceptance of the loss
- Social withdrawal, anxiety, increased shyness
- Decreased concentration, daydreaming, and attention
- Decline in hygiene
- Changes in diet and activity
- Substance abuse
- Erratic behaviors
- Obsession with memories and treasures from the deceased

Risk factors:

- Health issues: stomach, digestion, irritable bowel, heart, nutrition, changes in weight
- Safety issues: depression, substance abuse and risks, self-harm, suicide ideation

Factors that heighten risks due to grief:

- Sudden unexpected death due to suicide, murder, accidents or stigmatized causes
- Death or loss of a loved one
- Concurrent crisis in the child's life
- Perceived lack of social or physical support
- Ambivalence toward the deceased

What to do:

- Listen, love and comfort
- Communicate and put emotions into words
- Encourage increase in physical activity
- Gradually return to normal routine
- Family treatment for healing
- Utilize the resources in the Parent Toolkit
- Communicate with school and places of activity to bring awareness and support.
- Connect with a grief counseling center ex. Bridges (253)403-1966

