



Important Considerations of the Grieving Child

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- There may be differences in priorities: what YOU think is important may NOT be considered by the child as such.
- Do not EXPECT the child to behave in certain ways. If he or she immediately goes outside to play after learning about the death, THAT'S OKAY! It doesn't mean the child doesn't care or doesn't understand.
- It is very important for children to see the adults around them express their grief. This gives the child "permission" to do the same.
- Children are very sensitive and perceptive as well as protective. They may decide not to express their grief openly because they do not want to risk "making mommy cry."
- Almost anything can trigger grief reactions. Respect the child's need to express him or herself.
- Grief causes difficulty in concentration. Children often experience a shortened attention span, and school work is often affected.
- Other losses often accompany the identified loss. A change in residence, caretaker, school or peer group, adds to the loss. For the child's sense of security, it is important to try to stick to the usual family routine as much as possible.
- Children often know when they are not being told the whole truth, or when their questions are being avoided. Loss of TRUST will compound their grief.
- Grieving children are often busy with the task of establishing a new identity. "WHO AM I NOW?" becomes a major concern. Family roles may change as well as identities. This self-search often overshadows all other concerns for many weeks and months. *(This pertains especially to grieving teens and pre-teens.)*
- Grief lasts far longer than anyone expects. It may take months or even years before a child displays signs of the full impact of a family change; especially one as significant as death.
- Children and young people will continue to deal with the losses/changes they experience as they *grow* through their grief and discover that *love never goes away*.

