

Natural Expressions of Grief in Children



There is a wide range of reactions and emotions when a child is bereaved. Children will grieve in different and unique ways even within families, peer groups and school years.

When checking if someone is grieving healthily it is important to note any changes in behaviour from how they were before the death.

Behaviour

- Poor concentration - Daydreaming
- Quieter and more withdrawn / spending time on their own
- More disorganised
- Regressed behaviour – clinginess / bed wetting / soiling
- Sleep disturbance
- More tired than usual – lack of energy & motivation
- Increased or reduced appetite
- Intense episodes of distress – crying /angry / irritable
- Inappropriate social behaviour
- Lack of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Self harming behaviours

Feelings

- Sadness and depression
- Appearing more anxious than usual
- Irritable and angry – “short fuse” / aggressive towards others
- Repress emotions – may appear indifferent
- Mood swings
- Regarding life / work as meaningless

Other reactions

- They seem NO DIFFERENT to before the bereavement
- Adopting mannerisms or characteristics of the person who died
- Regarding school and / or homework
- Anger towards GOD
- Complaining of feeling unwell – somatic (ie not ill but feeling as if they are ill)
- Talking about the person who died as though they were still alive
- Not wanting to talk about the person who died
- Standard of work falls or improves

3 Vicarage Road Edgbaston, B15 3ES. 0121 454 1705.



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