



Understanding Children's Grieving

Children's grief and grieving process is not well understood or supported even though there is some research and information on the subject. (An overview of evidence-based interventions for children and young people experiencing bereavement, loss and grief August 2020 DOI: [10.13140/RG.2.2.28840.08961](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.28840.08961)) However between research completed, accepted children's social emotional development theories, and children's mental health best practices information and effective methods of support are available for implementation.

What we do know includes the following:

- Everyone experiences loss and grieves those losses throughout their lives including children/teens.
- Everyone, including children and teens, experience various cycles or stages in their grieving process.
- Everyone, including children/teens, need a consistent, compassionate support system of family, friends and often professionals to assist them in their grieving process.
- Children and teens need support that is age and maturity level appropriate from caring adults whom they trust.
- Children and teens need adequate time to process their grief which often takes several years.
- Children and teens need a variety of grief supportive activities to assist them in processing their grief.
- Children and teens need consistent, stable adults who recognize and understand that children and teens do grieve losses. Grief processing is a normal reaction to loss/trauma and that each child/teen has their own grief journey timeline which needs to be respected and supported.

What we can do to support children/teens:

- Recognize and acknowledge that a child/teen has experienced a loss/trauma and that they are grieving that loss.
- Provide ongoing compassionate, consistent support from adults/professionals the child/teen trusts.
- Be willing to listen to the child/teen as they share their loss and story.
- Provide a variety of activities for each child/teen that supports their individual healing.
- Recognize and support each child/teen's individual grief timeline adjusting expectations during the child/teen's period of grieving to provide time, energy and support for the grieving process.
- Understand that child/teen challenging behavior is often grief driven and provide grief sensitive interventions.
- Remember that just because children/teens can be resilient doesn't mean they should always have to be resilient.

**“You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think.”
Winnie the Pooh**

