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# Understanding Bereavement:

## Helping Children Cope with Grief and Loss

Dena Register, PhD, MT-BC

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# Understanding Grief in Youth

- Grief is a normal response to loss and varies widely among children and teens.

- Children may re-experience grief as they mature and understand loss differently.

- Developmental stage greatly impacts how grief is processed (Child Mind Institute, 2024).

# Developmental Responses to Grief

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Young Children (3–6):

May not understand  
death is permanent

School-age (6–12):

Increased fear, sadness,  
behavior changes

Adolescents (13–18):

Existential questions,  
withdrawal, mood swings

# Common Grief Reactions



- Emotional: sadness, fear, guilt, anger



- Behavioral: clinginess, withdrawal, regression, acting out



- Physical: changes in sleep, appetite, headaches, stomachaches



- Cognitive: confusion, difficulty concentrating (Better Health Channel, 2024)

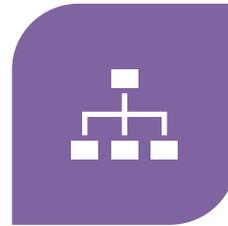
# Protective Factors and Resilience



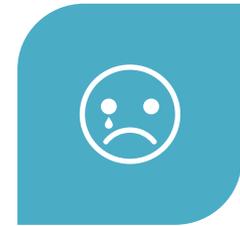
- STRONG CAREGIVER CONNECTION



- OPEN, HONEST COMMUNICATION



- CONTINUED ROUTINES AND STRUCTURE



- ACCESS TO GRIEF SUPPORT OR COUNSELING

# Effective Communication Strategies

Be direct and  
honest using  
simple  
language

Reassure  
children that  
their feelings  
are valid

Encourage  
questions and  
repeated  
conversations

Use creative  
outlets like art  
or storytelling  
to help  
express grief

# Role of Loved Ones and Community



- PROVIDE STABILITY AND ROUTINE



- GRIEF-INFORMED COUNSELING



- PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS



- COMMUNITY GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS

# When to Seek Professional Help

- Persistent depression, anxiety, or anger



- Self-harm or suicidal ideation



- Withdrawal from peers or school refusal



- Symptoms lasting beyond 6 months

# Grief-Specific Interventions

Opportunities to help build and share a personal story of loss

Music, Visual Arts, or Play to allow expression

Group experiences to share individual experiences and feel less alone in grief

Continued support over time, recognizing grief may resurface later in life



# Final Thoughts and Resources

- Grief is a journey, not a linear process.
- Compassionate adults can make a difference.
- Resources:
  - National Alliance for Grieving Children
  - Dougy Center
  - Child Mind Institute.