

AGE	CONCEPTS & BELIEFS	DIFFICULT EMOTIONS	POSSIBLE BEHAVIORS	HOW TO HELP
Birth - 2 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No understanding of death • Child does not have words for feelings • Aware of the absence of loved one • Notice changes in routine • Notice changes in family emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longing • Misses contact, sounds, smell, and sight of loved one • Fears of being abandoned • Anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crying • Sickliness • Indigestion • Thrashing • Rocking • Throwing • Sucking, biting • Sleeplessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical contact, cuddling, and reassurance • Maintain routines • Meet immediate physical needs • Include the child in the mourning process when possible • Be gentle and patient
3 - 5 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No understanding of permanence of death • To be dead is to be sleeping or on a trip • May wonder what deceased is doing • Can understand that biological processes have stopped, but sees this as temporary and reversible • May wonder what will happen if the other parent dies • Magical thinking and fantasies, often worse than realities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear • Sadness • Insecurity • Confusion • Anger • Irritable • Agitated • Worried • Guilty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regressive behaviors • Repetitive questions • Withdrawn • Plays out scenes of death, change, and feelings • Interested in dead things • Acts as if death never happened • Intense dreams • Physical complaints • Crying • Fighting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow the child to regress • Give physical contact • Encourage children to play and have fun • Allow safe ways to express feeling • Give simple and truthful answers to questions • Maintain structure and routines • Answer repetitive questions • Let the child cry • Talk (reflective listening) • Include child in family rituals and mourning
6 - 9 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands that death is final • Interested in the biology of death • Death associated with bodily harm, decay • His/her thoughts, actions, or words caused the death • Death is punishment • Forming spiritual concepts • Who will care for me if my caregiver dies? • Thinks about life's milestones without the deceased (graduation, marriage, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadness • Anger • Lonesome • Withdrawn • Worries • Anxious • Irritable • Confusion • Guiltiness • Fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regressive behaviors • Specific questioning - looking for details • Acts as if the death never happened • Hides feelings • Withdrawal • Nightmares / sleep disturbances • Concentration difficulties • Declining or greatly improved grades • Aggressive acting out • Protective of surviving loved ones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow need to regress • Give physical contact • Have intentional times together • Answer questions truthfully • Allow expression of feelings through verbal and physical outlets • Encourage drawing, reading, playing, art, music, dance, acting, sports, etc.

AGE	CONCEPTS & BELIEFS	DIFFICULT EMOTIONS	POSSIBLE BEHAVIORS	HOW TO HELP
9 - 12 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the finality of death • Denial • His/her words, thoughts, or actions caused the death • Thinks about life's milestones without the deceased (graduation, marriage, etc.) • High awareness of death (it may happen again) • What if my caregiver dies? • Formulating spiritual concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional turmoil heightened by physical changes • Shock • Sadness • Anger • Confusion • Lonesome • Vulnerability • Fear • Worried • Guiltiness • Isolated • Abandoned • Anxious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regressive behaviors and fluctuating moods • Hides feelings • Acts like death never happened • Aggressive acting out • Withdrawal • Nightmares and sleep disturbances • Concentration difficulties • Changes in grades • Talks about physical aspects of illness or death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow regressive behavior and offer comfort • Expect and accept mood swings • Encourage expression of feelings through writing, art, music, sports, etc. • Find peer support groups • Be available to listen and talk • Answer questions truthfully • Offer physical contact • Give choices about involvement in death and mourning
12+ Years (Teen)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the finality and universality of death • Denial • His/her words, thoughts, or actions caused the death • Thinks about life's milestones without the deceased (graduation, marriage, etc.) • High death awareness (death may happen again) • May sense own impending death • I need to be in control of feelings • If I show my feelings, I will be weak • Internal conflict about dependence and desiring independence • May utilize spiritual concepts to cope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly self-conscious about being different due to grief • Shock • Sadness • Anger • Confusion • Lonesome • Vulnerability • Fear • Worried • Guiltiness • Isolated • Abandoned • Anxious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasional regressive behaviors • Mood swings • Hides feelings • Acts like death never happened • Acts out role confusion • Aggressive acting out • Withdrawal • Nightmares and sleep disturbances • Concentration difficulties • Changes in grades • Impulsive and high risk behavior • Changes in peer group • Fighting, screaming, arguing • Changes in eating patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow regressive behavior and offer comfort • Expect and accept mood swings • Allow hidden feelings unless there is a risk of harm • Encourage expression of feelings through writing, art, music, sports, etc. • Support relationships with understanding adults • Be available to listen and talk • Answer questions truthfully • Share your grief • Watch for high risk behavior • Find peer support groups • Offer physical contact • Allow choices about involvement in death and mourning