

## Common Grief Reactions in Children

### AGES 2-6

Many children of this age will show little or no reaction at first. Some behavior changes that may occur are increased anger, regression, or clinginess. Some may have increased fears or nightmares. Abstract concepts are difficult to understand and they may think they have caused the death. Their pain and feelings are released through art and play.

### AGES 7-11

At this age, the child may yearn for the loved one but may want to hide their feelings because they don't want to appear childish or different from their peers. They may become fearful of dying and may have difficulty sleeping. Objects and photos are very important to children of this age. They tend to express themselves in art, stories, music, play and aggressive behavior.

### TEENAGE

Teens may feel they need to take care of the family and may become bossy in an effort to be in control. The pain they experience may be expressed through physical symptoms, anger, or depression. Some may become reckless and turn to aggressive behaviors. Schoolwork may suffer. It is important to set appropriate limits and listen as language is a common way that teenagers will express their grief. Support groups will help them feel normal and not alone in their grief.



**Our Mission is:**  
*Providing Compassion and Care  
with Dignity*

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# Children & Loss



*There are ways  
you can help*

## Hospice of Havasu Children's Bereavement Services provides:

- The Adventure in the Land of Grief, an 8-week after-school program featuring expressions through drama and creativity for children in grades K-6.
- The "When Life Changes" classroom program.
- Student grief support groups in the school setting for all grade levels.
- Referrals to community resources.
- Educational materials and presentations on grief and loss.
- One-on-one counseling for children who have experienced a loss.

*These services are provided  
at no cost, thanks to generous  
community donations.*



# WAYS YOU CAN HELP A GRIEVING CHILD

### **LISTEN TO THEIR WORDS**

Accept the child's words by reflecting back what the child said. Ask clarifying questions.

### **LISTEN TO THEIR ACTIONS**

Some children will express themselves through their behavior, their play or drawings. Others may not sleep well. Some children will excel in their school work, while others may have difficulty concentrating.

### **BE HONEST**

Children are able to sense when something is wrong. We may want to protect them by hiding the truth, but this will complicate their grief when they do find out. It will also teach them that hiding the truth is okay.

### **EXPECT AND ALLOW ALL KINDS OF EMOTIONS**

Shock, numbness, anger, sadness, fear. Some children will experience many, some very little, depending on the type of death, the age of the child and their relationship to the deceased. They may come and go at different times and in no particular order.

### **KEEP THEIR LIVES ROUTINE and CONSISTENT**

This will help alleviate the sense of disorder and anxiety which naturally follows a loss.



### **ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS**

Use concrete words, such as died or killed instead of "passed away." If you don't know the answer it's okay to say "I don't know."

### **TALK ABOUT THE PERSON WHO DIED**

Remembering a person who died helps children to heal. It will also give the child permission to share their feelings about the deceased.

### **FACILITATE THEIR EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS**

Some wonderful outlets for working out feelings are artwork, journaling, writing a story about their loved one, working with clay, or creating a family tree.

### **KEEP COMMUNICATION LINES OPEN WITH OTHER SIGNIFICANT ADULTS IN THEIR LIVES.**

Let one another know when you are noticing difficulties or changes. Get more information or help from the professional community.