



# Children and Grief Fact Sheet

## The Facts

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Grief is a normal reaction for children who experience a significant loss. Adults and children often grieve differently. It is important to understand how a child perceives death and loss based on their current age and developmental level.<sup>2</sup>

Some children may experience serious problems with grief and loss. If these warning signs persist, professional help may be needed.

## The Warning Signs

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- Inability to sleep, loss of appetite, prolonged fear of being alone
- Acting much younger for an extended period
- Losing interest in daily activities and events for an extended period
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Significant drop in school performance or refusal to attend school
- Believing they are talking to or seeing the deceased person for an extended period<sup>1</sup>

## Support & Treatment

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Encourage a child to express all feelings associated with grief. Understand that the child may cry in one moment and be happily playing the next. This is a developmentally appropriate way that children express grief. Children often process emotion through play. Be developmentally appropriate, direct, and honest when speaking with your child about the loss.<sup>2</sup>

If you notice that your child seems unusually upset and unable to cope with grief and loss, your child may be experiencing adjustment disorder. It is a good idea to speak with your child's doctor if you feel your child is not recovering from a loss in a healthy way.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2018. Retrieved from: [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Grief-008.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Grief-008.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> Child Mind Institute, 2020: Retrieved from <https://childmind.org/article/helping-children-deal-grief/>