



GRIEVING KIDS AND TEENS: SEEDLING FOUNDATION

CHRISTI
CENTER



Always Here After Your Loss

The Christi Center Mission and Services

*We offer hope after the death of a loved one
by providing support networks, community education & therapeutic activities
that are free, peer-based, and ongoing.*

- Adult peer grief support services
 - Specific groups for loss to overdose, crime, suicide and Covid-19
 - Group for pregnancy and early infant loss
 - Spanish support groups
- Grief support for kids (age 5-12) – onsite and at local schools
- Grief support for teens (age 12-19) - onsite and at local schools
- Direct support services in Central Texas schools
- Presentations and trainings on grief/loss



Doesn't Grief Come in Stages?

❖ **Four Tasks of Mourning** (William Worden)

- **To accept the reality of the loss**
- **To work through the pain of grief**
- **To adjust to an environment in which the person is missing**
 - Adjusting to many secondary losses and changes
- **To find and enduring connection to the person and move forward**
 - Understand that you can remember the positives while adjusting to change





The Lands of Grief and Tasks of Mourning

- ▶ **Reality Mountain:** Accepting the reality of the loss
- ▶ **The Valley of Pain:** Processing the pain of grief
- ▶ **Hills of Change:** Adjusting to the world without the deceased
- ▶ **Springs of New Normal:** Finding an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking of a new life

Physical Manifestations of Grief

- Separation of the mind and body
- Increased production of adrenaline and cortisol
- Decreased cognitive functions
- Decreased control of emotional behavior and learning
- Decreased stimulus-reward associations and conditional emotional responses
- Disruptions in key neurochemical systems and cognitive functioning that result in changes in attention, impulse control, sleep, fine motor control, visuospatial abilities, linguistic processing, memory and emotional modulation and coordination

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Behavioral Manifestations of Grief

- Crying or No Crying
- Excessive Talking and Yelling
- Tearing, Throwing, Hitting
- Regression
- Challenging or Overly Pleasing
- Hyperactivity or Resting
- Wandering, Hiding, Hoarding
- **Separation Anxiety or Withdrawing**
- Everything is Upside Down



Early Childhood

Ages 2-5

They are naturally egocentric.
They do not have the cognitive ability to understand permanence
or universality of death

What helps?

Provide short, honest answers and a comforting, consistent routine.

[Elmo and Dad](#)

Early Childhood Continued

Ages 5-7

- They are gaining language skills and the capacity to fantasize.
- This capacity to wish can lead them to blame themselves for the loss “I wished she would go away when I was mad”.
- Permanence of death is still difficult for some.

What helps?

- Provide more language to name their feelings, such as sadness, grief, anger, anxious, numb etc.
- Offer a safe place and various mediums to help them express their feelings.
- Help them understand that their wishful thinking did not play a part in the reality of the loss.

Middle Childhood

Ages 7-11

They are developing self confidence and developing logical thinking. **Loss often seen as punishment.** May withdraw socially and scholastically. These children also often “seem” to be doing well when in truth they are simply trying to maintain balance in their life after this life-altering event.

What helps?

- Be a role model for appropriate expression of emotions.
- Answer questions honestly and encourage the child to express their feelings.
- Provide healthy options and allow the child to choose how best to address their feelings.
- Provide alone time, while expressing your openness to be there for them to talk about it.
- Provide a physical outlet.

Loss to Incarceration



[Nicole Ausmer - Loss to Incarceration](#)

Grieving Children Activities and Understanding



Memories

- ▶ Family Pizza
- ▶ Memory box
 - [Jessies Memory Box](#)
- ▶ Ornament
- ▶ Journal (pictures and/or words)
- ▶ Tibetan Prayer Flag

What a Grieving Child Needs

- They need to know they will be cared for and who it will be.
- They need to know they did not cause the loss.
- They need clear information about the loss.
- They need to feel important and involved.
- They need to continue their normal routine and activities.
- They need someone who will listen to their fears, fantasies, and questions.
- They need ways to remember.
- They need adults to model healthy grief behavior.

Dr. J. William Worden

Adolescents

Ages 12-19

- They understand death cognitively, but are only beginning to understand it spiritually.
- They often feel that it is unfair and can act out, withdraw, and/or express a lot of anger.
- Often try to find a way to make meaning out of the loss.
- Can test their own mortality with increased risk-taking behaviors.
- Depression and regression are common.
- Often more comfortable seeking support outside of the family unit.

Comments from Grieving Teens

- ▶ “No one at school understands anything”
- ▶ “Sometimes I feel like a totally different person since my Dad died and other times I feel like nothing happened.”
- ▶ “I hate when people say I’m sorry.”
- ▶ “People call the house and ask how *my mom* is doing, not how *I* am doing.”
- ▶ “I just don’t belong anywhere anymore – at home, school, friends.”
- ▶ “I hate that my family has changed.”
- ▶ “When mom died, a part of me died too.”
- ▶ “My friends just don’t get it. They tell me they hate their brother....even when they know mine is dead.”

Grieving Teens



[JudisHouseDenver](#)

Grief Speaks



[Christi Center Grief Speaks Video](#)



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*No one has to
grieve alone*

www.christicenter.org

erin@christicenter.org

2306 Hancock Drive

Austin, TX 78756

