



Grieving Children at School

How does grief affect a child at school?

- Unable to concentrate and forgetfulness
- Clumsiness and accident prone
- Tired during the day because of sleep disturbances
- Lack of energy or too much energy
- Increased absenteeism
- Increased attention-seeking behavior
- Increased anger and frustration
- Increased physical complaints (stomachaches, headaches, injuries, etc.)
- Depression and withdrawal

What does a grieving child need?

- To be surrounded by caring adults who can model healthy grief behavior
- Continuance of their normal routine and activities along with their basic needs being met
- Information that is both factual and developmentally appropriate
- Opportunities to talk about the loss and the person involved when they wish
- Reassurance that their feelings and thoughts are normal and okay

How do I help a grieving child at school?

- Talk with the child to determine what he/she wants others to know about his/her situation
- Help the child with words to use when others ask questions they do not want to answer
- Keep things as “normal” as possible
- Create a plan with a signal that allows him/her to leave the classroom if needed
- Establish a safe, quiet alternative to the classroom

Tasks of Mourning:

- To accept the reality of the loss
- To work through the pain of grief
- To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing
- To find an enduring connection with the deceased while embarking on a new life

When does a grieving child need help?

- The child has little or no support system
- Extended withdrawal from family and/or friends
- Dramatic change in personality or attitude
- Fighting or legal troubles
- Academic failure or overachievement
- Exhibits self destructive behavior