



Death from a Youth's Point of View

Children are often the forgotten grievers.

Children and adults grieve differently. Children grieve more intermittently.

Other factors such as personality traits, coping styles, family dynamics, prior mental health and life stressors, and the circumstances of the death impact how a child handles a particular death loss. Children re-grieve at each developmental stage. What may feel like a step back is part of the process.

ADOLESCENTS (AGES 12+)

Child's Understanding

- Full awareness of death but only beginning to grapple with it spiritually
- Possible survivor guilt
- Often try to make meaning out of the loss

Frequently Observed Behaviors

- Can test their own mortality with increased risk-taking behaviors
- Depression and regression common
- Feel that life is unfair and can act out, withdraw, express anger
- Focus on relationships outside the family
- Striving for independence yet often fragile inside

What Helps?

- Be available and let them know you are there if they need you
- Validate their feelings and be open to discussing all the "why" questions about life and death
- Be supportive and tolerant of behavior as long as it is not harmful to themselves or others
- Respect adolescents need to work through grief independently and their reliance on friends
- Encourage expressive outlets to channel strong emotions and search for meaning

