

What Children, Adults, and Teachers Need to Know About Grief

Since 1980, EveryStep's Amanda the Panda has delivered love and caring through innovative services such as weekend grief camps, support groups, fun days, school visits and holiday support to inspire hope and healing after the death of a loved one. For more information, visit: everystep.org
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What Children Need to Know...

- They are not alone.
- It's okay to ask for help.
- Their world has been completely changed and will never go back to the way it was.
- It's normal to be afraid, to cry, to feel lonely and to be angry.
- They don't make you cry when they ask questions and speak about your loved one.
- It's okay to be a child and not have to act like an adult.
- It's okay to feel that life is unfair.
- They can trust the adults around them.
- Grief is a family matter.
- They are loved just as much as before the death.

What Adults Need to Know...

- You don't need to have all the answers.
- You can't "fix it" and make it all better.
- You can ask for help – from adults and children.
- Children will grieve, play, ask questions, and grieve again in short spaces – be ready to respond when they're ready to share!
- Children are not just small adults.
- Crying and questioning are healthy for all ages.
- Children/teens need to be with friends, to attend school and to be active.
- Children need reassurance that they did not cause the death.
- Children, teens and young adults need affirmation and support from adults.

What Teachers Need to Know (Possible School Reactions)...

- Become the class clown– Become withdrawn and unsociable – Call out of turn
- Become restless in staying seated – Not complete homework – Become overly talkative
- Have problems listening, staying on task – Become disorganized – Show reckless physical action
- Show poor concentration around external stimuli – Show difficulty in following directions
- Teachers can mistake a student's healthy expression of grief- talking, crying, etc. as "having problems with a loss," when this is normal for up to 2 years after a loss. Grief is not something that ends in a few weeks or months.
- Teachers can mistake a student's lack of open expressions of grief as "not really having any problems with the loss." Children learn to hide grief so they don't stand out as weird or different at school. They also censor around adults to avoiding upsetting them.