



8605 Allisonville Road, #140, Indianapolis, IN 46250-1552

317-596-2202

www.i-cart.org

How Children Grieve

Kids work through many of the same emotional stages that adults do when a loved one dies: numbness, denial, anger, guilt, sadness and, eventually, acceptance. Because they don't always understand the concept of death and may not be able to articulate their feelings, their grief is often expressed in nonverbal ways, depending on their age.

BIRTH THROUGH 2 YEARS

- Cry a lot or become fussy
- Develop stomach or bowel problems or have trouble sleeping
- Clinging, whining and other signs of anxiety tend to become more pronounced

3 THROUGH 5 YEARS

- Revert to babyish behavior: thumb sucking, bed-wetting, or demanding a bottle (When children act in this manner as a result of a death, adults need to indulge them.)
- Talk as if the deceased will return

6 TO 10 YEARS

- Just beginning to understand death is final
- Curious about details (how the person died, what happens to the body afterward)
- Quiet children may become aggressive and lash out at others
- Others might withdraw for fear of being abandoned again
- Shorter attention spans, lack of energy, sickness, insomnia, or pleas to stay at home

10 AND UP

- Especially tough on this age because kids this age are going through so many physical and emotional changes anyway
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigued all the time
- Begin engaging in risky behaviors (Rash acts like these are usually a cry for attention or an expression of their own tentative desire to stop living and join the deceased.)