

Grief Responses

(Parent/Teacher Hand out)

Grief is a normal, healthy and understandable response to loss. People experience the emotions described below in different ways. Generally the grieving process in adults is thought to take about two years, while with children and adolescents it may be over a more extended time-frame with different issues arising as they go through developmental milestones.

Denial, numbness, shock

- Denial of the person's death.
- Suppression of emerging feelings.
- Refusal to talk about the death.
- Keeps busy to avoid thinking about the death.
- Shows signs of confusion and forgetful of everyday routines.
- Displays either silent withdrawal or outbursts of crying.

Acute grief/searching and longing for deceased

- Acute sadness – crying.
- Physical aches and pains.
- Loss of appetite and disturbed sleep.
- Emotional pain accompanied by dejection, hopelessness and lack of concentration.
- Intrusive thoughts.
- Disorganisation.
- Strong guilt feelings and questioning of self and others, particularly in the case of a sudden death.
- Fear of forgetting the deceased.
- Feelings of anger at the departed for leaving them.
- Sense of isolation.
- Rejection of offers to comfort.

Adaptation to life without the deceased

- Adjusting to life without the person who has died.
- Less crying and irritability.
- Exacerbation of existing personality problems. Children with low self-esteem may be at a greater risk of emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Normalisation of life

- Getting on with life.
- Returned sense of humour and play.
- Shows renewed interest in existing relationships.
- Forms new relationships.
- Thinking of the deceased with less pain.
- Reduction in physical and emotional symptoms.
- Less guilt.