



School Safety and Crisis

When Grief/Loss Hits Close to Home: Tips for Caregivers

The nature of the loss (i.e., expected vs. sudden) will impact the way caregivers address the loss of a family member. While grief is often characterized by sadness, emotional pain, and introspection in adults, children's grief reactions will vary depending upon their developmental level. More specifically among _____ one might observe regressive behaviors, decreased verbalization, and increased anxiety. Among _____ one might observe decreased academic performance, attention/concentration, and attendance; irritability, aggression, and disruptive behaviors; somatic complaints; sleep/eating disturbances; social withdrawal; guilt, depression, and anxiety; and repeated telling of the event. And _____ age youth one might observe decreased academic performance, attention/concentration, and attendance; avoidance, withdrawal, high risk behaviors or substance abuse, difficulty with peer relations, nightmares, flashbacks, and emotional numbing or depression. The death of a family member may be further complicated by the child's relationship to the deceased as well as to the surviving parent (e.g., if mom and dad are divorced). Cultural factors are important to consider when working with family members after a loss.

children to talk more about their experiences. Although most of these strategies are appropriate in therapeutic settings, some may be adapted for parents and family members to use at home. Narrative therapy or helping your children “tell their own story” about their experiences can be

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