

Children's and Teens' Grief

If your child is old enough to love, they are old enough to grieve. They feel sadness and yearning after the loss of a family member or friend and look to the adults in their lives to show them what to expect and how to deal with all the troubling thoughts and feelings that may surface.

As a parent, you will be faced with the challenge of coping with your own grief at the same time your children will need your support with theirs.

Sometimes you may find it hard to listen to their anger or sadness because it brings deep emotions that you may have tried to avoid. Keep in mind that for you and your children, the best way to survive this loss is to be open with the feelings and questions that will come.

This information is provided to help you anticipate and understand the changing needs of your children and teens when a death has occurred in your family. Remember that this information is only a guideline and that everyone will grieve in their own way and time.

Three things to remember when supporting grieving children and teens:

1. Children and teens are frightened by what they don't understand.

Find ways to explain the death in simple concrete terms. Explain what a dead person will no longer do. (i.e. walk, eat, breath, feel)

2. Children and teens look to important adults in their lives to learn how to grieve:

Help them understand that feelings of sadness and anger are normal. Also, help them to find safe, acceptable ways to express these feelings.

3. Children and teens are not likely to talk about their questions or feelings about the death if **you** don't want to talk about the person who died. Your children are sensitive to your moods and behavior. If they sense that you don't want to talk about the person who died they will also keep their feelings inside.

CHILLIWACK HOSPICE SOCIETY

Mission Statement

Chilliwack Hospice Society is a community based Volunteer organization which accepts death as a part of life. We support individuals and families during the dying and grieving process.

Our Values

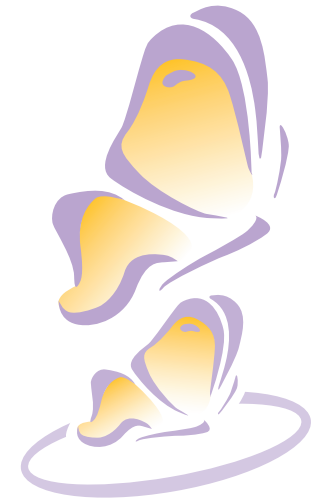
1. *We believe that every person has worth and a right to be treated with gentleness and respect.*
2. *We believe that every person has the potential to experience hope, wonder and joy.*
3. *We believe that diversity and inclusiveness are vital to the strength of our organization.*
4. *We believe that the strength of relationships in our organization is based on trust and open communication.*



Also funded by Chilliwack Bingo



HELPING CHILDREN GRIEVE



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The Grieving Process

When Death Occurs Walking the Edge

Social

- Avoidance of peers or social situations
- Increased dependence on parents or caregivers

Physical

- Dizziness, restlessness, weakness, diarrhea, constipation, vomiting or stomach ache
- Change in appetite and sleep patterns

Emotional

- Withdrawal or explosive temper tantrums
- Numb or flat expressions
- Feeling alone or scared

Mental

- Confusion and disbelief
- Poor concentration and forgetfulness
- Focused on the topic of death or the person who died

Spiritual

- Blaming God, parents or self
- Wishing to die, or to be with the person who died
- No belief in the future (older children)

Important Reminder: Include your child in remembrance rituals.



Adjusting to Loss Entering the Depths

Social

- Wanting (but not asking for) the attention of parents and other important adults
- Self-consciousness with friends about the loss

Physical

- Continuation of earlier responses
- Low energy
- May have symptoms of the illness that the person died from

Emotional

- Unexpected mood swings
- Feeling hopeless, sad, guilty, fearful or angry
- Acute sense of missing the person and yearning for the person to come back to life

Mental

- Daydreaming, forgetfulness and confusion
- Doubt or denial about the cause of death or its permanence

Spiritual

- Continued blaming of God, parents or self
- May seek comfort in thoughts and questions about Heaven or saying prayers

Important Reminder: Recognize and support your child's unique style and pace through grief.

As Life Goes On Mending the Heart

Social

- Restored desire for independence
- Interest in new activities and friendships

Physical

- Reduction of physical responses
- Renewed energy for activity
- Return to usual sleep and eating patterns

Emotional

- Emotions settle down and become less intense
- More happiness and self confidence
- Less guilt, fear and anger

Mental

- Improved concentration and understanding
- Less focus on the death and the person who died
- Increased maturity

Spiritual

- Reconnection with faith and less blame
- Able to forgive self, parents and others

Important Reminder: Expect periodic returns to grieving at significant transitions in you child's life.

