

Child Development Birth to 3 Years

General Concepts of Development	Concept of Death	Grief Issues	What Helps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Experiences the world through his/her senses •Attachment is developing along with stranger anxiety •Language, motor, cognitive, social/emotional development is critical •Trust vs. mistrust develops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Has no concept of death •Sense that something is different or has changed when a main caregiver is no longer present •Senses caregiver's emotional distress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •May respond to death with irritability, change in sleep, eating and play patterns •May regress •May search for caregiver •May be very attached to remaining caregiver and fear separation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Provide nurturing, love and physical closeness •Maintain a schedule •Take photos of deceased so that child will be able to look at them at a later date if needed •Take child to a portion of funeral or service •Use appropriate vocabulary for age (i.e. mommy is dead, she is not coming back) •Answer questions •Model/encourage appropriate expression of feelings and memory sharing •Keep a journal for child of important events, ceremonies, newspaper clippings and stories

Child Development 3-6 Years

General Concepts of Development	Concept of Death	Grief Issues	What Helps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egocentric • Focuses on one thing at a time • Inanimate things can be alive • Magical thinking-just thinking about something can make it happen • Continues to learn about world through senses • Play is critical to development • Time is reversible, may be able to recall some very memorable past events • Continuing to develop trust • Pre-operational: unable to perform mental operations (reversal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have a concept of death, depending on death experiences • Death may be caused by thoughts and feelings • May be interested in physical and biological aspects of death and dead body (what the body feels like after death, what does the inside of the casket look like?) • May think death is like sleep • Senses caregiver's emotional distress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May appear fine • May respond to death with irritability, change in sleep, eating and play patterns • May regress • May be concerned with who will be caregiver • May show feelings, thoughts through play because he may not have the vocabulary to explain self • May be very attached to remaining caregiver and fear separation • May ask questions repeatedly • Very curious • Physical reactions and acting out behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer questions • Maintain a schedule • Take photos of deceased so that child will be able to look at them at a later date if needed • Take child to a portion of funeral or service • Include child in funeral/service • Use appropriate vocabulary for age (i.e. mommy is dead, she is not coming back) • Provide play opportunities • Model/encourage appropriate expression of feelings and memory sharing • Keep a journal for child of important events, ceremonies, newspaper clippings and stories

Child Development 7-12 Years

General Concepts of Development	Concept of Death	Grief Issues	What Helps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egocentric • Beginning to understand cause and effect • Concrete-operational: understands concrete concepts • Magical thinking-just thinking about something can make it happen (this is lessening) • Continues to learn about world through senses • Play is critical to development • Peer relationships are becoming very important • Self esteem is developing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death is sometimes thought of as ghosts • Beginning to understand finality of death • May be interested in physical and biological aspects of death (what the body feels like after death, how long does it take to decompose? What happens in cremation?) • May feel that he caused death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May appear fine • May respond to death with irritability, change in sleep, eating and play patterns • May regress • May be concerned with who will be caregiver • May feel a stigma at school or around peers • May be very attached to remaining caregiver and fear separation • May be concerned about future of self and others • Very curious • Physical reactions and acting out behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer questions • Maintain a schedule • Take child to funeral or service if he chooses • Include child in funeral/service • Use appropriate vocabulary for age • Be honest and factual • Provide play opportunities • Model/encourage appropriate expression of feelings and memory sharing • Keep a journal for child of important events, ceremonies, newspaper clippings and stories • Keep in contact with school

Child Development Teen Years

General Concepts of Development	Concept of Death	Grief Issues	What Helps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Formal operational: thinks abstractly, like an adult •Egocentric •Magical thinking-just thinking about something can make it happen (this is minimal) •Attempting to find a balance in terms of independence and dependence of caregiver •Peer relationships are very important •Self esteem is developing •Searching for identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Death is final, an end to physical life •Realization of own mortality and thinks about meaning of life •May be interested in physical and biological aspects of death (what the body feels like after death, how long does it take to decompose? What happens in cremation?) •May feel that he caused death •Understands future and what loss will mean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •May appear fine •May respond to death with irritability, change in sleep, eating, school and social behaviors •May be concerned with who will be caregiver •May feel stigma at school or around peers •May be attached to remaining caregiver/family •May be concerned about future of self/others •May attempt to take on role of deceased •Struggles with needing support and not wanting it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Answer questions •Maintain a schedule •Take adolescent to funeral or service if he chooses •Include adolescent in funeral/service •Be available when teen wants to talk •Be honest and factual •Reduce expectations •Model/encourage appropriate expression of feelings and memory sharing •Keep a journal for adolescent of important events, ceremonies, newspaper clippings and stories •Keep in contact with school •Start a family communication journal