



## CHANDLER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

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### ***DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES AND CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO GRIEF***

#### **Grief Reactions      Ages 2-5**

Confusion, agitation at night, frightening dreams, regression. Child often understands that a profound event has occurred. Repeated questioning. Child's understanding of death is limited.

#### **Helpful Approaches      Ages 2-5**

Simple, honest words and phrases. Reassurance, Secure, loving environment. Drawing, reading books, playing together. Include in funeral rituals.

#### **Grief Reactions      Ages 5-8**

Wants to understand about death in a concrete way, but thinks, "won't happen to me." Denial, anger, sorrow. General distress, disoriented, confused. May behave as though nothing has happened. Desire to conform with peers. May ask questions repeatedly. May need physical activity on a regular basis.

#### **Helpful Approaches      Ages 5-8**

Simple, honest words and phrases. Answer questions simply and honestly. Look for confused thinking. Offer physical outlets. Reassurance about the future. Drawings. Reading books, playing together. Include in funeral rituals.

#### **Grief Reactions      Ages 8-12**

Shock, denial, anxiety, distress. Facade of coping. Finality of death understood. Phobic behavior, morbid curiosity, peer conformity. May need physical activity on a regular basis.

#### **Helpful Approaches      Ages 8-12**

Answer questions directly and honestly. Reassurance about future. Create times to talk about feelings. Offer physical outlets. Reading. Include in funeral plans and rituals.

### **TALKING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT DEATH AND TRAMATIC SITUATIONS**

- Children do not have to know everything about death or a violent situation in order to come to some understanding about it.
- Be sensitive to the child's questions, taking cues from what is asked and the level of cognitive and emotional development.
- Do not talk children out of their feelings. Rather, permit them to talk out their feelings.
- Children fear death from either incomplete thinking or lack of knowledge.
- Children's concerns do not always reach us through conversation. Sometimes they come obliquely through play.