



# How Children Experience Grief at Different Ages

Grief doesn't look the same at every age. Parents may see changes in routines or behavior at home, while teachers and counselors may notice shifts in the classroom.

## Toddlers & Preschoolers (2-5 years):

- Believe death is temporary or reversible.
- Repeat the same questions often.
- At home: clinginess, regression (bedwetting, thumb-sucking).
- In school: themes of death in play, more separation anxiety, or withdrawal from group activities.

## Early Elementary (6-8 years):

- Begin to understand death as permanent but not universal.
- Ask direct, sometimes blunt questions.
- At home: worries about parents' safety.
- In school: trouble focusing, disruptive questioning, emotional outbursts.

## Older Children (9-12 years):

- Recognize death as universal and final.
- Want details about how death happens.
- At home: guilt, anger, or sadness about the future.
- In school: social withdrawal, grades slipping, missing assignments, less engagement in projects.

## Adolescents (13+ years):

- Fully understand death as permanent, sometimes unjust.
- Ask big existential or spiritual questions.
- At home: withdrawal, intense emotions, or risk-taking behaviors.
- In school: declining performance, absenteeism, irritability with teachers, loss of interest in extracurriculars.



For additional resources and support, email [GriefSupport@carefirstny.org](mailto:GriefSupport@carefirstny.org) or call (607) 962-3100.