

Tips for Recognizing a Grieving Child or Youth

At the *Children and Youth Grief Network*, we understand that grief involves all kinds of feelings which may include anger, guilt, worry, numbness, sadness and/or relief. Grief is not a single event, but a life-long process; children will revisit their grief at each new developmental stage, milestone, transition, or other major change in their lives. We also know that children grieve differently than adults and other children, and can show grief in different ways. While there is no “right” or “wrong” way to grieve, we do know there are certain indicators of children who are grieving. Rest assured, *these behaviours are totally normal* and are not always indicative that your child is coping poorly.



- Intense fear and anxiety about others dying or dying themselves.
- Intense need to be near a parent at all times, or fear of leaving home.
- Communication changes: Talking about the death/person or refusing to do so.
- Crying or not wanting to cry.
- Being irritable or angry.
- Difficulty focusing or concentrating at school or during typical activities.
- Acting out at home or in school including non-compliance, clowning or bullying.
- Changes in school/recreational functioning: over achieving or lack of interest/avoidance in school, sports or other activities.
- Changes in activity levels: Increase or decrease in activity.
- Regressive behaviors.
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, digestive issues.
- Being unable to sleep, including nightmares, or sleeping excessively.
- Changes in eating habits.
- Child feels like no one can understand them, that they are alone.
- Spending less time with friends.
- Increased empathy for others.
- Different outlook/perspective on life.
- Looks more or less to faith/spirituality.
- Longing or “pining” for their loved one. Some children may express desires to die or go to heaven; be aware that this is not always about suicidal ideation, rather, this desire is often rooted in being with or seeing their loved one again.
- Tears and heightened sensitivity.

* Please see other Tip Sheets on ***Communicating with Your Child or Youth About Grief***, ***Parenting When Your Child or Youth is Grieving*** and ***The Importance of Self-Care in Helping Your Child or Youth Grieve***

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The Children and Youth Grief Network is a collaboration of 11 agencies and organizations across Peel, Halton & The GTA. Visit our website to learn more about our partners and how we can help: www.childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com Or connect with us on social media: https://twitter.com/c_grief
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Tips for Recognizing a Grieving Child or Youth Our Network & Contact Information

**When this tip sheet was posted, all the information and links below were accurate.*



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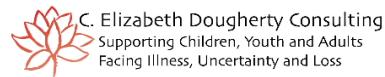
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