



Living Healthy,
Working Well

Wellness Tips

DEVELOPMENTAL AGES AND POSSIBLE REACTIONS TO DEATH

AGE	THINK	FEEL	DO
3-5 years (preschool)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death is temporary and reversible • Finality of death is not evident • Death mixed up with trips, sleep • May wonder what deceased is doing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sad • Anxious • Withdrawn • Confused about changes • Angry • Scared • Cranky (feelings are acted out in play) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cry • Fight • Are interested in dead things • Act as if death never happened
6-9 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About the finality of death • About the biological process of death • Death is related to mutilation • A spirit gets you when you die • About who will care for them if a parent dies • Their actions and words caused the death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sad • Anxious • Withdrawn • Confused about the changes • Angry • Scared • Cranky (feelings are acted out in play) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behave aggressively • Behave withdrawn • Experience nightmares • Act as if death never happened • Lack concentration • Have a decline in grades
9-12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About and understand the finality of death • Death is hard to talk about • That death may happen again, and feel anxious • About death with jocularity • About what will happen if their parent(s) die • Their actions and words caused the death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable • Anxious • Scared • Lonely • Confused • Angry • Sad • Abandoned • Guilty • Fearful • Worried • Isolated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behave aggressively • Behave withdrawn • Talk about physical aspects of death • Act like it never happened, not show feelings • Experience nightmares • Lack concentration • Have a decline in grades
12 years and up (teenagers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About and understand the finality of death • If they show their feelings they will be weak • They need to be in control of their feelings • About death with jocularity • Only about life before or after death • Their actions and words caused the death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable • Anxious • Scared • Lonely • Confused • Angry • Sad • Abandoned • Guilty • Fearful • Worried • Isolated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behave impulsively • Argue, scream, fight • Allow themselves to be in dangerous situations • Grieve for what might have been • Experience nightmares • Act like it never happened • Lack concentration • Have a decline in grades

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