

Children and Change

Grief is a natural and normal reaction to loss and change. It is a physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological response. The death of a loved one is perhaps the most devastating loss one may experience. Yet, grief occurs following any change in our lives. Even positive changes can bring a momentary grief response.

We cannot always know what a child is thinking or feeling. We must take cues from their behavior. A child grieves his losses with the same hurt as an adult...perhaps for different reasons, but the hurt is just as deep and no less painful simply because the surface area is smaller.

Children tend to cope with change by expressing themselves in ways of behaving. They act out their feelings and fears rather than talk about them. They may not always understand why they hurt, but they can clearly identify that they hurt! All children react differently, but some of the most common expressions of grief in children (whether they are coping with a death, divorce, abandonment, family move or friendship dissolution) are:

- Anger
- Feelings of abandonment
- Guilt
- Apparent denial
- Bodily distress
- Temper outbursts
- Regression
- Silence
- Withdrawal
- Panic
- Depression
- Overactivity
- Behavior changes
- Disinterest in previously engaging activities
- 'Model Behaviours'
- Increased dependency upon significant adults