

A wooden swing seat hangs from a chain against a green grassy background. The swing seat is made of dark wood and is suspended by two metal chains. The background is a soft-focus green lawn.

WARNING
SIGNS

of
YOUR CHILD'S GRIEF

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CHILDREN AND GRIEF



When a loved one dies, each child may feel and show his/her grief in different ways. Coping with the loss of a loved one depends on several factors, such as the child's age, the closeness to the person who has passed, and the support s/he is receiving at the time.

If you and your family are maintaining a reasonably normal environment with its usual routines, talking about the loved one who has passed, discussing how each person feels about the loss, and showing how much you care about each other, you may be concerned about your child's overly prolonged and intense grieving period. Your child may be displaying some troubling behavioral changes, which were understandable at first, but do not seem to be lessening with time.

AN OVERLY PROLONGED GRIEVING PERIOD

The identity as well as the circumstances surrounding the death of a loved one are very critical factors when coping with grief.

Initially, talking about a loved one's death may be very difficult, especially depending on how close the person was to your child.



However, if your child continues to have difficulty expressing his/her feelings about the death, regardless of the care, patience, and encouragement being shared by you and other family members, this may indicate a serious problem. There are other behaviors your child may be displaying as well, such as : an increase of aggression & anger; unwarranted stomach aches & headaches; difficulty sleeping; and/or eating too much, too little, or not at all.

OTHER TROUBLING BEHAVIORS



Perhaps some of the most troubling behaviors your child may be exhibiting occur outside of the home environment.

Your child may stop wanting to be around his/her friends and/or other people who are not part of the immediate family.

Going to school has presented a number of significant problems. Your child's teachers have cautioned you with several of these changes:

- His/her academic performance has seriously declined.
- S/he is struggling to concentrate on daily classroom routines.
- S/he refuses to participate in most classroom activities.
 - Unacceptable behaviors are escalating.

MAJOR WARNING SIGNS



If your child, for reasons unknown to you, is holding on to continuing blame and/or guilt regarding the death of a loved one, you may need to seek the help of a therapist or counsellor.

If your child is engaging in dangerous, risky behaviors and talks about wanting to hurt his/herself as well as others, professional help will be needed to give you and your child the opportunity to talk about these difficulties in a safe and non-judgmental space.

BENEFITS OF THERAPY



The age of your child during the tragedy of losing a loved one can be very significant. S/he may experience some age-related behavioral regressions.

Very young children and infants are deeply affected by loss, especially if it is a parent. They may have trouble understanding the permanence of death. Children under the age of 8 can benefit from Play Therapy.

Older children can benefit from Role-Play and other outside-the-home interventions. Grief Counsellors and Family Therapists are specially trained.

Finally, seeking help as a family gives you and your child opportunities to discuss feelings and concerns in a neutral and impartial environment.

IMAGE CREDITS

cover page/swing-Counselling

boy on a hill-Brett Jordan

girl covering face-Caleb Woods

two children-Izzy Park

curly-headed child-Janko Ferlic

girl covering ears-Counselling