

# **SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AFTER A SUICIDE LOSS**

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# GRIEF AND MOURNING

Grief is the painful psychological and physiologic response to loss

Mourning is the expression of grief and which is most effected by cultural values

Grief and Mourning can occur after any loss



# GRIEF

Grief is experienced in four ways

1. Psychological
2. Behaviorally
3. Socially
4. Physically



# **GRIEF CONTINUED**

Grief involves many changes over time

Grief is natural

Grief is a reaction to all types of loss

Grief is unique to the individuals perception of  
the loss



# MOURNING

Defined as the cultural and /or the public display of grief through one's behavior

According to Rando (1993) intrapsychic work, adaptive behaviors necessitated by the loss



# TASKS OF GRIEF

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

William Worden

Therese Rando



# ELIZABETH KUBLER-ROSS (1969)

Denial and isolation

Anger

Bargaining

Depression

Acceptance



# **WILLIAM WORDEN (1982)**

Accept the reality of the loss

Experience the pain of the loss

Readjust the environment


Reinvest emotional energy in other  
relationships






# **THERESE RANDO (1993)**

**Six “Rs”, the process of mourning:**

1. Recognize the loss
  2. React to the separation
  3. Recollect and Re-experience the deceased and the relationship
  4. Relinquish the old attachments to the deceased
  5. Readjust to move adaptively into the new world without forgetting the old
  6. Reinvest
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# VARIABLES INFLUENCING THE CHILD'S GRIEF

- 1. Causes and circumstances of the loss**
    - Where and what the child is told
    - Opportunities to ask questions
  - 2. Family relationship after the loss**
    - Changes in living situation
    - Changes in parenting
  - 3. Patterns of relationship within the family prior to the loss**
    - Relationship between parents
    - Relationship with the child
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# WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

## GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

Encourage physical activities

Encourage resumption of social activities, athletics, clubs

Increase patience with your child and with your self. Give yourselves time to cope.

Encourage participation in community activities and school events

Find ways to emphasize that you love your children

Develop programs for peer support such as at-risk student support groups, telephone hotlines, or drop-in centers

# **GRIEF IN CHILDREN**

# **PRESCHOOL 2-6 YEARS**

Participation in reenactments

Anxiety, not wanting to sleep alone, separation  
and stranger anxiety

Mute withdrawal

Regression

Repeat brief periods of grieving



# **PRESCHOOL 2-6 YEARS (CONT'D)**

Nightmares and sleep disturbance

Does not understand death and its permanence

Anger rejection

Changes in routine seen as threatening



# **SCHOOL AGE 6 – 10 YEARS**

Decline in school performance

Radical changes in behavior

Expression of reactions via play or art

Withdrawal from adults

Obsessive talk about death

Regressed behavior



# **PREADOLESCENCE**

Child like attitude

Anger at the unfairness

Suppressed thoughts and feelings

Sense of meaninglessness

Psychosomatic illnesses





# ADOLESCENCE

Premature closure of identity formation

Acting out behaviors

Self-criticism

Fear of repetition of event in the future

Need to establish control

Repression primary defense



**GROUP 1**

**SUICIDE**

What is your brain?

What is the function of your brain?

How does your brain work?




What is your heart?

What is the function of your heart?

How does your heart work?



# What causes a person's heart to stop working?

1. Illness
  2. Stress
  3. Substance use
  4. Trauma
  5. Other illnesses in the body
  6. Sudden
- 

## **GROUP 2**

### **STORY OF THE LOSS**

Picture of the person who died.

Who was this person in your life?

Letter to the loved one.

# GROUP 3

## IDENTIFY THE LOSS

Bunch of balloons-Dorothy  
Ferguson

What you lost

What you still have

# GROUP 4

Where is your loved one now?

Picture of belief system.



# GROUP 5

What is grief to you?

Write the feeling, emotions,  
and behaviors.

# GROUP 6

What does grief look like?

Draw picture of your feelings.

# GROUP 7

What is your saddest memory?

What is your happiest memory?

# GROUP 8

Draw a picture of your family.

Where does the deceased fit into the picture?

# REFERENCES

Rando, Theresa (1984). *Grief dying and death: Clinical interventions for caregivers*.  
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Worden, William J. (1982). *Grief counseling and grief therapy*. New York, NY: Springer  
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