



## Children React to Death in Many Different Ways:

**Feeling Insecure:** It is not uncommon for kids/teens to worry about their own health or the health of their family.

**Denial of Death:** Kids/teens may pretend that the death did not happen.

**Guilt:** Be aware that they may feel guilty because they are still alive or wished that the person had died because their illness was going on for so long. They may also feel guilty for misbehaving or being afraid to be around the person who was dying. Normalize this for them.

**Sense of Relief:** Kids/teens may experience a sense of relief that their special person is no longer in pain. They may also hope that life will return to “normal” at home.

**Real and Imagined Physical Complaints:** They may start complaining of headaches and stomach aches. They may start having some imaginary illnesses.

**Changes in Sleeping Behaviors:** Kids/teens often have difficulty with sleep issues: nightmares, not wanting to sleep alone, changes in their bedtime routine.

**Acting out Feelings:** Often for younger kids they may not have words to express their feelings of grief so they start acting out with aggressive behavior, rough play, unusual anger or games about death.

**Regressive Behaviors:** These are very common behaviors for kids/teens as they are assimilating the reality of the death of their special person. They may become clingy, thumbsucking, temper tantrums, bed wetting, ect.

**School Issues:** Anticipate poor concentration, not wanting to return to school, poor performance, not turning in assignments. It is important that the school knows what has happened and to come up with a plan.

**Holding in Feelings:** Kids/teens may not talk to the adult in their home for concern of being a burden with their grief. Try to find other trusted adults for the kid/teen to share with if possible.

