

**Excerpts from**  
***150 Facts About Grieving Children***  
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- (1) Death in a child's life is inevitable and unavoidable. The incidence of death experiences in children's lives is obvious. Almost every child will experience the death of a significant other, be it a pet, friend, or relative. More dramatically, about 1 out of 20 will experience the death of a parent by age 18. In an average size school, about every 3-4 years a child can be expected to die, affecting the lives of the child's friends, schoolmates, teachers, and family.
- (4) Children grieve differently at different ages. As they mature, they have to re-work their grief. For example, a daughter will grieve differently at 13 for her mother who has just died than she will at 25 when has just had her first child and becomes a mother herself.
- (15) Give children honest information about death based on their level of maturity. Don't assume that children are too young to understand, and don't worry that they will be scarred for life by anything that you say to them regarding death. They will process what they can understand, and what they can't understand will probably be brought up again at a later date.
- (20) It is important for the child that the family talks as a group about the loss, especially if the person who died is a close family member. Sharing memories is a healthy part of healing.
- (30) Children are often forced to use the coping behavior that their parents use, even though this way of coping may not be right or healthy for the child. For example, a parent may feel that the best way to cope with the loss is to remove all pictures and belongings of the deceased, whereas the child may find the grief work inhibited by being denied these items that give great comfort.
- (49) Children are not usually aware that adults have many of the same feelings that they do regarding grief...or that other bereaved children share their feelings. Grief has a way of isolating young and old alike into thinking they are the only ones having these painful feelings. Thus, there is a tendency to try to endure these feelings in silence.
- (50) Children need to know that their feelings are normal grief feelings, even though they may not be normal under any circumstances. For instance, anger at God or severe guilt is normal. It is when these feelings persist for many months that concern should be acted upon.
- (55) Because society tends to rally around the adults when a family member dies, the children involved may consciously or unconsciously deny the validity of their own loss. They may see their own grief as not justifiable, and may not begin their own grief process for many years to come...or maybe never.

- (88) Often a later, less significant loss, such as the loss of a pet turtle, can open a floodgate of tears and grief. The bereaved child is really grieving over the loss of a significant person who died. Unconsciously, transferring this grief to a pet or inanimate object is far less threatening. This is as healthy a way as any for the child to get these painful feelings out.
- (89) To many, the strong feelings of grief in children are unbelievable and may be discounted. The term "the forgotten mourners" is often applied to grieving children because our society has been very slow to recognize that children do grieve and with the same intensity as adults.
- (100) Most bereaved children like to remember and talk about the deceased with friends and relatives. Unfortunately, there is a phenomenon called "the conspiracy of silence" that makes it difficult for others to talk about the dead person because they are afraid of hurting the bereaved person's feelings. The bereaved person, on the other hand, has hurt feelings when people won't talk about the deceased with them. It is a "catch-22" situation.
- (120) For many children, it is hard to go back to school after the loss of a loved one because of the unknown reactions they will get from classmates and teachers. They do not know if they will be swamped with sympathy or ignored altogether. It is important that re-entering is a positive experience for the child because a child's classmates may well be the closest social circle the child has.
- (139) Most bereaved children are not looking to adults to take away their grief as much as they are looking for validation of their grief and encouragement that they will get through it.
- (143) Children have a great deal of emotional strength that most adults do not give them credit for. Many children would fare far better than their adult counterparts were it not for the anxieties placed upon them by the adults around them.
- (150) As they say in Alcoholics Anonymous, "A cucumber can become a pickle, but a pickle can never become a cucumber again." After a significant loss, every bereaved child is forever changed; forever different. In most cases, this is a positive change. They will never know the innocence that they knew before, but maybe this isn't all bad. Wiser for the experience, most bereaved children grow up to be wonderfully well-adjusted adults.