

Developmental Stages and Reactions to Death



Age	Understanding of death	Reactions	How adults can help support
Infant-Toddler	-Do not understand death	-Sense change in environment and feelings of caregivers -Change in behavior	-Maintain routine -Emotional support -Calm presence -Identifying emotion observed
Preschool	-View death as reversible, not permanent -Magical thinking	-Ask questions over and over -Try to find the person -Change in sleep pattern -Fears of abandonment	-Clear, concrete explanation -Routine -Play out emotions
School-age	-Understand death is permanent -May ask for more details	-Concern that it will occur again -Difficulty focusing -Withdrawn -Physical complaint	-Honest information -Expressive activities -Memory making activities
Adolescent	-Death is permanent -Trying to understand the meaning of life -Friends are support	-Withdrawn -Risky behavior -Difficulty focusing -Lack of sleep -Hiding feelings -Self-blame	-Support groups -Give facts -Expressive activities -Validate feelings