

# Developmental Stages and Reactions to Death



Age	Understanding of death	Reactions	How adults can help support
<b>Infant-Toddler</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Do not understand death</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sense change in environment and feelings of caregivers</li> <li>-Change in behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Maintain routine</li> <li>-Emotional support</li> <li>-Calm presence</li> <li>-Identifying emotion observed</li> </ul>
<b>Preschool</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-View death as reversible, not permanent</li> <li>-Magical thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ask questions over and over</li> <li>-Try to find the person</li> <li>-Change in sleep pattern</li> <li>-Fears of abandonment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Clear, concrete explanation</li> <li>-Routine</li> <li>-Play out emotions</li> </ul>
<b>School-age</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Understand death is permanent</li> <li>-May ask for more details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Concern that it will occur again</li> <li>-Difficulty focusing</li> <li>-Withdrawn</li> <li>-Physical complaint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Honest information</li> <li>-Expressive activities</li> <li>-Memory making activities</li> </ul>
<b>Adolescent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Death is permanent</li> <li>-Trying to understand the meaning of life</li> <li>-Friends are support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Withdrawn</li> <li>-Risky behavior</li> <li>-Difficulty focusing</li> <li>-Lack of sleep</li> <li>-Hiding feelings</li> <li>-Self-blame</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Support groups</li> <li>-Give facts</li> <li>-Expressive activities</li> <li>-Validate feelings</li> </ul>