

General Information:

Reactions to Traumatic Events by Age Group

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	REACTIONS	NEEDS
PRESCHOOL AGE CHILDREN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regression (thumb sucking, bed wetting) • crying • clinging to parents • anger • loss of appetite • acting out of traumatic events in play • fear of the dark/sleep disturbances/resisting naps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cuddling, hugging, touching • reassurance that someone will take care of them
4 TO 6 YEAR OLDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confusion • fear of abandonment • guilt • regression • changes in eating and sleeping patterns/nightmares • crying • anger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reassurance that they are not to blame • explanation of death in physical terms, using body-oriented words • reassurance that someone will take care of them/hugging
6 TO 9 YEAR OLDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • withdrawal, isolation, regression • irritability/aggressiveness • denial • panic, separation anxiety, fear of death • changes in eating and sleeping patterns/nightmares • decrease in school performance • anger at the deceased or other who "caused" the death • glorify and idealize the deceased • may assume the characteristics, role, or responsibilities of the deceased • magical thinking about death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to be held • to feel that someone will take care of them • reassurance that they are not to blame • explanation of death and answering their questions • listen to them • allow them to participate in the family's grief
9 TO 11 YEAR OLDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shock • crying, sadness, anxiety • anger, disobedience, aggressive behavior • changes in eating and sleeping patterns • regression/clinginess • decline in school performance and concentration • school avoidance, withdrawal from activities and friends • glorify and idealize the deceased • fear of own death and death of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide comfort and support • explain unanswered questions about death • listen to them • including them in discussion about the death and the aftermath • may need to comfort others