



When We Lose Someone

Denial: Quite often denying the reality of what has happened acts as a shield for a child while they try and figure out what has just happened. It can be like a safety zone that they do not easily want to come out of. They feel numb with shock, not wanting to come to the funeral. They may develop illnesses or imagine talking to the deceased. Sometimes, children can seem totally unaffected by what has happened carrying on as normal. This will often mask the turmoil that is going on underneath but is being denied by the child.

Bargaining: Children often believe that they have the power to change everything around them, if they try hard enough. So, it can often be the case that a child for example will be extra specially good to try and stop the inevitable happening.

Feelings of Anger, Fear, Guilt, Isolation as the reality of the loss becomes real children can go through a lot of very big and deep feelings. Some of these, like guilt, may not seem appropriate but they feel real to the child.

Depression and Sadness: As the child begins to integrate the loss, they will often feel a real and deep sadness. While it can feel tempting to try and help your child avoid such low feelings, it is within this stage that they will start to accept the death as a fundamental reality in their life. Do not rush this stage and be aware that these feelings of sadness may come in short bursts over a long period (see download on “Listen and Talk”).

Acceptance: It often takes years to accept the loss of a loved one but there will come a time where planning for the future with hope will be possible again. The pain will not feel so intense and the child can start talking about the loss with a mixture of emotion and matter of factness.

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