

Birth – 3 Years: Cognitively <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaning or permanency of death • Concept of time 	Physical Reactions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very aware of differences in environment and “gone-ness” of loved one • Often exhibit physical symptoms of grief (sleep, eating, bowel changes) • Difficult to soothe 	Supporting Birth – 3 Year Olds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain routines • Choose familiar and supportive caregivers • Assign a support person during funeral/ritual • Affection • Acknowledge feelings by naming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Around 2 ½ yrs children can grieve through play to express grief
Children 3-5 Years: Cognitively <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still considered Pre-conceptual or Preoperational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See death as reversible – so parents have to retell the story of death • Through magical thinking- may assume responsibility for death • Don’t have the language to articulate feelings (use art, play, music) 	Physical Reactions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often experience separation anxiety • May experience physical symptoms (headaches, stomach aches) • May regress to earlier behavior • May quickly shift from grieving to “normal play” 	Supporting 3-5 Year Olds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain routine • Reinforce that tears that they see are natural • Assure that their needs will still be met • Offer play with themes of death, while providing guidance
Children 6-9 Years: Cognitive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to understand concept of illness/ death as they move forward, concrete operational thinking • Tend to be aware of irreversibility and universality • May still engage in magical thinking • Tend to see death as something physical • Worry that others will die 		Supporting 6-9 Year Olds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to questions carefully, what information is the child seeking? • Encourage child to answer questions • Increase physical activity and stress reducing behaviors • Work on identifying and talking about feelings (Create a marble jar, every time the name of deceased is mentioned, have them place a marble in the jar.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May wish that they could die to re-join deceased 		<p>Sometimes children don't talk about deceased because they don't want the adult to hurt more. After the jar is full, go do something fun that the deceased might have done. <i>This activity came from Molly Tomony, LPC, ATR-BC)</i></p>
<p>Children 9-12 Years: Cognitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concrete logical operational thinking • Problem-focused coping skills • Can articulate feelings, express grief sporadically • Verbalize needs • Find meaning in their loss 		<p>Supporting 9-12 Year Olds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide accurate information • Encourage exploration of own beliefs/thoughts • Encourage physical outlets • Rituals/inclusion
<p>Adolescence: Cognitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin shift from concrete operational thinking-(formal/logical) to abstract/reflective • Numerous psychosocial and emotional tasks (separating from parents, joining peer groups, forgiving identity, risk taking behaviors, believe they are immortal) • Begin to make future goals, commitments to others • Time of questioning, arguing, debating, developing moral awareness • Grief is regressive(they want to be independent yet they want to curl up 		<p>Supporting Adolescence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconditional positive regard, honesty, empathy, build trust • Verbal and non-verbal avenues for expression (music, writing, art, exercise) • Correct distorted information about loss that may lead to guilt, anger (sometimes hurtful or angry things are said before the person died. Give adolescence an opportunity to talk about it) • Rehearse adaptive ways to cope • Advocate and educate to create a support network

with mom) and can interfere with tasks of separation		
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Source: *Children Coping with Grief and Loss: Creative Interventions*, Molly Tomony LPC, ATR-BC, UW
Madison Grief Certificate Program, 2017.