

## Seven Steps to Remember in a Child's Grieving Process (Regardless of the Type of Loss)

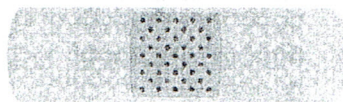
1. Children need to be informed to make sense of the reality of the loss.
2. Children need to experience and feel the pain of the loss.
3. Children need time and space to express their sorrow through tears, talking, art and play.
4. Children need to identify and express their range of feelings.
5. Children need to know why others are sad and why they themselves are feeling sad. Truth and understanding bring clarity (i.e. be specific: "My sadness is because of the death, divorce, disaster, addiction, violence, etc. ...").
6. Children need to remember, revisit, review and relinquish their loss at each developmental stage of life, to the extent that their current understanding of loss allows.
7. Children need to participate in rituals of remembering as a healing tool.

Communication, information and a safe, supportive environment provide children the time to absorb the loss and reconstruct their new world. Grief is unique to each child, and the time for integration of loss is theirs alone.

Excerpt from "Always There"<sup>TM</sup>  
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## “GOODBYE MEANS OUCH”



Saying goodbye is always stressful. If you've ever had to say it, then you've experienced some amount of grief. Certainly the death of someone close causes grief, but so do lesser losses of daily living – only to a smaller degree.

Big losses, little losses; big griefs, little griefs – when you lose something in which you've invested yourself, it always causes stress. It hurts and leaves a wound that must be healed.

Grief is the process of healing that follows the loss. It is natural. And it is necessary.

People react differently to loss, but regardless of how it is expressed, accepting and acknowledging the pain is an important first step in healing. Tolerance within the family for the many forms of expression is important.

If the healing process is short-circuited by refusing to acknowledge suffering, the distress is compounded. When feelings are hidden to numb the pain, the healing process is delayed.

Unrecognized, unhealed grief leaves festering wounds. Unresolved grief is a factor behind a surprising amount of stress-related disease. At least one-third, possibly up to one-half of people hospitalized is suffering from a recent loss experience. Unfinished grief is a powerful source of distress.

So, what do you do about the stress of grief?

Go ahead and grieve.

Grief isn't the problem; it's the solution.

Give yourself permission to grieve.

People who go through surgery usually accept the fact that they won't regain full physical strength for quite some time. Often, however, persons with an emotional loss won't give themselves time to heal. They compound the problem by becoming inpatient. You need to give yourself permission to feel the pain that follows loss. Invest yourself again.

After you've been hurt, it's natural to hesitate making new investments. Grief, however, calls for new investments. Look for people and challenges in which you can reinvest your love and attention.

Use strengths resulting from grief.

Although grief is seldom an experience people choose, it is an opportunity for growth. As a result of your pain, you will find you possess a new set of strengths. Use them to help yourself and others.

Work on your faith.

Loss signals life's impermanence. Grief reminds people of death. Faith helps you deal with others' deaths as well as your own. Every grief experience invites you to renew your acquaintance with the mysteries of life.

Lean on others.

Share your grief with others. It keeps the healing process flowing. Join a group whose members are working through their own grief process and who are committed to caring. Sometimes you can't do it alone. Reach out.

Taken from: Stresstalk

**Grief Responses:  
Differences and Similarities Between Adults and Children  
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**Similarities**

Children experience the full range of grief feelings.

Children need to work through the same tasks of grief.

Grieving children need social support.

**Differences**

Children's grief is more intermittent. Children need to take breaks from their grief – to play, have fun, and be with friends. Adults have more capacity to tolerate painful affects on a sustained basis.

Children have earlier access to joyful memories of the deceased. Almost immediately, children are comforted by positive memories. Adults are often unable to access the positive memories until they have processed some of the painful ones.

Young children are often afraid of forgetting the deceased. They need adults' help to refresh their memories with stories, rituals, and mementos.

Children's ability to work through the tasks of grief is limited by their development. Children can only process their grief to the extent that their current understanding of death allows.

Children have to grow up with the loss. Children may need to re-grieve – and they will process the loss differently – at each developmental stage.

Whereas adult "grief bursts" are often triggered by anniversaries, a resurgence in a child's grief is just as often triggered by the arrival at a new developmental stage, where the deceased's absence is felt in a new way.

For children, continuing bonds with the deceased may change as developmental needs change. For example, the 14 year old girl who lost her father when she was 3 is likely to supply for herself, through her imagination, the father she needs now.

Children's grief is more often misunderstood and unacknowledged.