

Children and Loss

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Every death has a life of its own. Many western models have attempted to explain grief and bereavement as a process of tasks and stages that individuals move through accordingly. Emerging perspectives suggest the importance of developing healthy relationships with losses, where people find meaning and place for the deceased in their ongoing lives. Experiences of loss are deeply influenced by the ways in which we are able to move between grief and the day to day life adjustments. They are continual processes of coping, adapting, and building capacity to move forward.

Children's grief experiences are influenced over time, embedded in the developmental, social, and cultural contexts in which all experiences exist. All children are different and their view of the world is unique and shaped by different experiences. For young people, the search for meaning through loss can take on many forms. How does one restore a world that feels safe and makes sense? Adjusting to the reality of illness and death is further complicated by their conceptual understanding of death and dying and the lack or distortion of information they receive. Professionals, families, and communities play an integral role in attending to these unique psychosocial needs that may arise during loss experiences. How can health care teams support young people? What are the challenges and barriers? When working with grieving children we are witness to a profound journey. Entering this journey requires an embracing of their spirits, willingness to companion, and a belief they are the experts of their grief.