

## Grief Reactions

This list of symptoms is not all inclusive. Individuals may or may not experience any one of the symptoms listed. It is important to note a crisis may trigger a reaction in someone with unresolved earlier issues.

### **Behavioral Symptoms**

- withdrawal from others
- extreme quietness
- loss of appetite
- crying
- absent mindedness
- over talkativeness
- verbal attacks
- fighting
- excessive hugging
- excessive humor or silence

### **Cognitive Symptoms**

- inability to concentrate
- difficulty making a decision
- self-destructive thoughts
- difficulty solving problems
- preoccupation
- confusion
- disbelief
- cynicism

### **Emotional Symptoms**

- anger
- guilt
- denial
- mood swings
- depression
- hysteria
- irritability
- helplessness
- fear
- loneliness
- anxiety
- rage
- feeling disconnected or isolated
- numbness

### **Physical Symptoms**

- headaches
- fatigue
- shortness of breath
- dry mouth
- dizziness
- pounding heart
- chills or sweating
- heaviness of body
- sensitive skin
- empty feeling in body
- tightness in chest
- muscle weakness
- tightness in throat
- stomachaches

(See other side for Trauma Reactions)

## Trauma Reactions

**Trauma reactions are different from grief reactions. These reactions may appear in children following disasters, acts of violence, sudden unanticipated death, critical injuries, car fatalities, house fires, drownings and sudden unexpected incidents involving family or friends. The one word that best describes grief is sadness; the one word that best describes trauma is terror. Terror can induce reactions in children that are different from children who are grieving. You should be concerned when your child has:**

- trouble sleeping, afraid to sleep alone or be left alone even for short periods
- is easily startled by sounds, sights, smells similar to those that existed at the time of the event,
- becomes hypervigilant - forever watching out for and anticipating danger,
- seeks safety spots in their environment, in whatever room they may be in at the time, i.e. sleeping on the floor instead of the bed for fear the comfort of the bed will let them sleep so soundly they won't hear oncoming danger,
- becomes irritable, aggressive, acting tough, provoking fights,
- verbalizes a desire for revenge,
- acts as if they are no longer afraid of anything or anyone, i.e. verbalizes that nothing scares them anymore,
- forgets recently acquired skills,
- returns to behaviors that had previously stopped, i.e. bedwetting, nail biting, stuttering,
- withdraws and wants less to do with their friends,
- develops headaches, stomach problems, fatigue, and other ailments not previously present,
- becomes accident prone, taking risks they had previously avoided, putting themselves in life threatening situations, reenacting the event as a victim or hero,
- develops school problems including a drop in grades, difficulty concentrating,
- develops a pessimistic view of the future, losing their resilience to overcome difficulties, losing hope, losing their passion to survive, play and enjoy life.

**If you are concerned that your child may be experiencing any of these reactions please seek professional help. Your school guidance counselor or school social worker may assist by helping you identify appropriate community resources.**