

Army Reserve Child, Youth & School Services

IMPACT OF GRIEF AND LOSS

Educators and other helping professionals often find themselves in the critical position of supporting kids struggling with significant life changes, personal stress, and losses or the death of a parent/loved one. The grief resulting from these experiences can be defined as “the internal anguish bereaved persons feel in reaction to a loss they have experienced.” It is important to remember that kids grieve, too, and they may or may not “show it” outwardly to the rest of the world. What is critical is that we understand their varied responses and provide quality support to guide them through the process toward healthy resolution.

RESPONSES OF GRIEVING CHILD/YOUTH

Academic

- Inability to focus or concentrate
- Failing or declining grades
- Incomplete or poor quality of work
- Increased absence or reluctance to go to school
- Forgetful, memory loss
- Overachievement – trying to be perfect
- Underachievement – giving up
- Inattentiveness
- Excessive daydreaming

Emotional

- Insecurity, issues of abandonment, safety concerns
- Concern over being treated differently from others
- Fear, guilt, anger, regret, sadness, confusion
- “I don’t care” attitude
- Depression, hopelessness, intense sadness
- Overly sensitive, frequently tearful, irritable
- Appears unaffected by change/loss/death
- Preoccupation with wanting details
- Recurring thoughts of suicide, death

Behavioral

- Disruptive behaviors, noisy outbursts
- Aggressive behaviors, frequent fighting
- Non-compliance to requests
- Increase in risk-taking or unsafe behaviors
- Isolation or withdrawal
- Regressive behaviors to time when things felt more safe and in control
- High need for attention
- A need to check in with parent/significant other



CONTINUED ON BACK 

CYSS Mission: To support readiness and quality of life by reducing the conflict between military mission requirements and parental responsibilities



This information has been provided by Army Reserve Child, Youth & School Services.
For more information on resources and programs, please visit:
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Social

- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Withdrawal from activities and sports
- Use of alcohol and drugs
- Changes in relationships with peers and teachers
- Changes in family roles
- Wanting to be physically close to a safe adult
- Sexual acting out
- Stealing, shoplifting
- Difficulty being in a group or crowd

Physical

- Stomachaches, headaches, heartaches
- Frequent accidents or injuries
- Nightmares, dreams, or sleep difficulties
- Loss of appetite or increased eating
- Low energy, weakness
- Nausea, upset stomach, hives, rash, etc.
- Increased illness, low resistance
- Rapid heartbeat

Spiritual

- Anger at God/Higher Power
- Questions of “Why me?” or “Why now?”
- Questions about meaning of life
- Confusion
- Feelings of being alone in the universe
- Doubting or questioning current beliefs
- Sense of meaninglessness about the future
- Changes in values, questioning what is important



Information for this article adapted from *Helping the Grieving Student: A Guide for Teachers* (1998) by the Dougy Center: National Center for Grieving Children and Families.



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