

There are excellent online and printed resources that are available for use with children of all ages.

Below are some suggestions

[www.virtualhospice.ca/kidsgrieve2](http://www.virtualhospice.ca/kidsgrieve2)

[dougy.org](http://dougy.org)

[www.cc.nih.gov/ccc/patient\\_education/pepubs/childdeath](http://www.cc.nih.gov/ccc/patient_education/pepubs/childdeath)

Parenting a Grieving Child  
by M. Poust

What Happens when Someone Dies?  
by M. Mundy

What do we Tell the Children?  
by J. Primo

Water Bugs and Dragonflies  
by D. Stickney

The Next Place  
by W. Hanson

Dealing with Dying, Death and Grief  
During Adolescence  
by D. Balk

Caring for each other in the community

If you would like additional suggestions, would like to simply chat, or need assistance finding additional resources in the larger community, please feel free to call or email.



**Morse & Son Funeral Home**

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Niagara Falls, ON L2G 5Z7  
Phone (905) 356-3550  
Facsimile (905) 356-9916  
[www.morseandson.com](http://www.morseandson.com)

**Morgan Funeral Home**

415 Regent Street  
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Grief is experienced at every age

No two people experience life in identical ways. Similarly, no two people will grieve the death of a loved one in the same way.

There are differences in a person's grief journey that are influenced by many factors, including age, life stage, circumstances surrounding a death, along with cultural and spiritual beliefs.

Inside this brochure you will find information that may be helpful in relation to....

Infants & Toddlers

Children

Youth

..... who have experienced the death of a relative, friend, classmate or neighbour.



## Infants and Toddlers

A very young child may not understand the full meaning of what death is, however, there is no doubt that they experience the changes that occur in their own lives which accompany the death of a close family member or other loved one. They know that something is missing.

Infants and toddlers often lack the ability to verbalize their own feelings. Supportive adults can take cues from a young one's behaviour in order to help relieve their distress.

There may be an increase in irritability that most often results from a change in their normal routine and/or primary caregiver.

A change in eating, toileting and sleeping patterns is not uncommon at this age. Do your best to meet them where they are in their need.

For example, a child who was learning to crawl suddenly stops trying. A child who has not used a pacifier or cuddle blanket for many months may suddenly start thumb sucking or clinging to a blanket. A previously toilet trained toddler may have an increasing number of accidents.

Rather than coercing or scolding, tending to their needs with affection and understanding will reassure them that they are still going to have their needs met.

It may take several weeks or months for a grieving infant or toddler to adjust.

Be patient. They are grieving too.

## School-Aged Children

Children have many ways of processing and responding to news that someone has died. Do not expect children to respond/act as adults.

**It is not uncommon** for children to regress in emotions or behaviour. For example, a child who has slept in their own room may suddenly be afraid to sleep alone or with the light off. A child previously very independent and social may now want to stay close to home and seem clingy. These, along with many other behaviours, are normal grief responses.

When speaking about someone who has died, use simple and concrete terms. Do not use vague language. *Grama died vs We lost Grama.*

A child may ask questions repeatedly, be patient and answer them honestly. They are trying to understand and will grow in their understanding over time. Your words will help to reduce the chance of wild imaginings, misplaced guilt or other misunderstandings.

Try to keep children on their regular routine as much as possible. This helps to create feelings of security during times when they may feel insecure. Spending a few quiet moments each day with a child can help to reassure them that they are loved and cared for, and that they have not been forgotten in the midst of a very difficult time.

Children learn by watching. They need to see and hear how adults can express their grief in a variety of ways. This frees them to express their feelings rather than hide any feelings.

## Youths and Teens

Experiencing a death often leaves youth feeling powerless and uncertain. Having a trusted adult to speak with can help to create a safe place in their lives. Truthful conversations about death and its potential impact on them are important.



Parents should feel free to express their grief in healthy ways in the presence of youth, but should not look to a teen for primary support.

Recreation with friends, or alone, can provide a much needed release from the hard work of grieving. Walking, bike rides, painting, etc.

Reasonable and consistent boundaries are essential when supporting youth who are grieving. They need to know that there are adults who care enough about them to set limits.

As with other ages, there may be a change in eating, sleeping, or social behaviours. Grief work is hard work. Making sure there are plenty of nutritious snacks and drinks readily available will help during a time when youths are experiencing emotional and physiological changes.

Teens will be watching adults who are grieving. Adult behaviours such as alcohol or drug abuse or refusing to display any emotions will not be helpful. Healthy, mature responses such as sharing feelings, exercising and eating well will provide an excellent model for teens to follow.