

# Eight Myths About Children, Adolescents, and Loss

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**1. Children do not grieve, or only grieve when they reach a certain age.**

Children grieve at any age. The way grief is manifested will vary, depending on the child's age, development, and experiences.

**2. The death of a loved one is the only major loss that children and adolescents experience.**

Children and adolescents experience a range of losses. The loss of a pet, dreams, separations by divorce or relocations, losses of friends or relationships, as well as losses due to illness or death can generate grief reactions.

**3. It is better to shield children from loss. They are too young to experience tragedy.**

Although we'd like to protect children from loss, it is impossible. Exclusion can increase fears and breed feelings of resentment and helplessness. We can support, teach and model our own ways of adapting to loss and include rather than exclude children and adolescents.

**4. Children should not go to funerals or Children should always attend funerals.**

Children and adolescents should have the choice as to how they wish to participate in funeral rituals. They will need information, options and support.

**5. Children get over loss quickly.**

No one gets over significant loss. Children, like adults, will learn to live with the loss and may revisit that loss at different points in their development.

**6. Children are permanently scarred by early, significant loss.**

Most people, including children, are resilient. While loss can affect development, solid support and strong continuity of care can assist children as they learn to live with loss.

**7. Talking with children and adolescents is the most effective approach in dealing with loss.**

While there is much value in openly communicating verbally with children and adolescents, there are approaches that allow the child or adolescent creative ways of expression. Play, art, dance, music, activity, and ritual are examples of creative modes of expression that they may use to express grief and adapt to loss.

**8. Helping children and adolescents deal with loss is the responsibility of the family**

Families do have a critical responsibility. But it is a responsibility shared with other individuals and organizations such as hospices, schools, faith communities, as well as the community at large. In times of significant loss, it is important to remember that the ability of family members to support one another can be limited.