



How Can Grief Manifest in Children

Grief is a complex and deeply personal experience. No two people grieve in the same way. This is especially true for children, who may express their grief in ways that are different from adults. Understanding how grief can manifest in children is key to providing them with the support they need.



Puddle Jumping

"puddle jumping" refers to the way children often navigate their emotions in the aftermath of a loss. Unlike adults who may experience grief in a more linear and sustained way, children tend to move in and out of their grief, much like jumping between puddles.

It is usually the result of a child's age, emotional development, and reduced attention span.

Imagine a puddle full of sad feelings; a child may jump into this puddle when someone important to them has died. But children can't cope with sad feelings for too long, so eventually they need to jump out and do something that distracts them, like playing with their friends or going to the park.

Child Bereavement UK

Growing Around Grief

Grief isn't something you "get over." It's something you grow around. Grief does not shrink, instead you expand the space around it - for new experiences, thoughts and emotions. It is not linear - some days the grief can take up all the space, and other days, you find space for other feelings and moments.



Adapted from: Tonkin, L. (1996). Growing around grief—another way of looking at grief and recovery. Bereavement Care, 15(1), 10-10.

How to support your child in their grief

Encourage Expression
Art, play, talking—their way

Be Patient
Grief has no timeline

Seek Support
Don't be afraid to ask for help

Maintain Routine
Predictability provides security

Don't underestimate the child
Age-appropriate truths are vital

Spend time together
Fun distracts and connects

Offer Comfort
Hugs, gentle words, just be there

Honour Memories
Share stories, create a memory box

Normalise Grief and Talk
Show your own feelings

Establish a Supportive Environment
Be their safe space

For information about Hospice Isle of Man's Young Persons Support visit: hospice.org.im/supporting-you



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