



Kaleidoscope Overview of Grief

What is Grief

Grief is the normal and natural response to loss, a universal human experience. Grief takes place over time, sometimes over a lifetime. It does not take place all the time, but surfaces intermittently, and usually in unpredictable ways. The experience is different for every student and can include powerful, often overwhelming combinations of reactions.

A significant loss, which can be considered a life crisis, can threaten a child or adolescent's social and psychological balance and may challenge typical coping skills. This experience can pose both a threat and an opportunity: Coping with death can produce growth and maturity and a sense of confidence about dealing with life. It can also overwhelm a child, leaving them emotionally and socially devastated, which can undermine confidence in dealing with life.

It is a universal goal to provide each student with the tools and supports necessary to becoming a healthy productive adult: mind, body, and spirit: *Kaleidoscope* aims to partner with the school system to create a safe environment conducive for learning. School is where we prepare children for life, and loss is a part of life.

Grief Cycle

One of the many struggles of grief is that it can resurface in the months, or even years to come, as the student progresses through life's milestones. There is no limit on grief, as it is a *process* and is part of the child's ongoing experience.

Children may need a break from grief. Having fun or laughing is not disrespectful to the person who died. This is a vital part of grief work. Grief is expressed through behaviors, emotions, physical reactions and thoughts.

How Does Grief Impact Learning?

Children have many learning responsibilities and grief can certainly be a detriment to learning, as the child's safety may be in question and intense feelings may unfold. Grief is a part of growing up and allows us opportunity to teach them about life and death. When a student grieves it can impact their ability to learn. Many of their thoughts and feelings are then based on the experience of the death, leaving minimal space for new information to be retained.