

# Grief and Loss Assessment for Children

## Helping Children Grieve

Children grieve differently from adults. A parent's death can be particularly difficult for small children, affecting their sense of security. Often, they are confused about the changes they see taking place, particularly if well-meaning adults try to protect them from the truth or from their surviving parent's grief. Limited understanding and an inability to express feelings put very young children at a special risk. They may revert to earlier behaviors (such as bed-wetting), ask questions about the deceased that seem insensitive, invent games about dying or pretend that the death never happened.

Coping with a child's grief puts added strain on a bereaved parent. However, angry outbursts or criticism only deepen a child's anxiety and delays recovery. Instead, take extra time and talk honestly with children, in terms they can understand. Help them work through their feelings, and remember that they are looking to you for suitable behavior and coping skills.

When your child has experienced the death of a loved one, it can be difficult for you to know what to expect. The fact is that everyone grieves differently – but by answering the following grief assessment questions you can determine whether your child might benefit from additional support services.

- 1 Has your child experienced changes in his/her sleep patterns since the death?
- 2 Has your child experienced changes in his/her eating patterns since the death?
- 3 Has your child demonstrated changes in his/her academic performance since the death?
- 4 Has your child demonstrated increased dependency since the death?
- 5 Has your child's overall behavior noticeably changed (increase in energy, acting out more, increased aggression)?
- 6 Has your child been more withdrawn and/or appeared sad or depressed?
- 7 Has your child complained of an increase in physical complaints since the death?

## **Helpful Resources**

Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) <http://www.militarychild.org> 254-953-1923

Military OneSource <http://www.militaryonesource.com> 1-800-342-9647

National Association of Home Care and Hospice (NAHC) <http://www.nahc.org> 202-547-7424

National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) <http://www.nctsn.org>

National Military Family Association (NMFA) <http://www.nmfa.org> 1-800-260-0218

The Centering Corporation <http://www.centering.org> 1-866-218-0101

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) <http://www.taps.org/youth/> 1-800-959-8277 (959-TAPS) (24-hour hotline)

Tricare: Your Military Health Plan <http://www.tricare.osd.mil>

ZERO TO THREE (Military Families) [http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=key\\_military](http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=key_military) 202-638-0851

