

Age Range

Developmental Responses to Separation or Loss

Infants to 3 years

- Increased irritability, due to change in environment, caregiver, and routine
- Change in appetite/sleep patterns
- Sense trauma and change through senses (i.e. touch of others)

3 to 6 years Magical Thinking Stage

- Increased separation anxiety (More "clingy" behavior)
- Regression
- Increased irritability, due to change in environment, caregiver, and routine

7 to 9 years Concrete Thinking Stage

- Believe they caused death
- Interested in physical aftermath of body
- Increased physical activity, especially males
- Violent play, even if the death was not violent

10 to 13 years Needs Answers NOW Stage

- Hypervigilance-unsafe/daring behaviors
- Increased physical activity, especially males
- Needs to know answers regarding death immediately
- Suicidal ideations

14 and up Problem Solving & Abstract Thinking Stage

- Intense & increased emotions
- Hypervigilance-unsafe/dangerous behaviors
- Depression
- Suicidal ideations
- Questioning own morbidity
- May refuse to discuss death or grief issues, DO NOT pressure them to talk

ALL CHILDREN MAY EXPERIENCE:

- Intrusive nightmares where they are the victims in the nightmare, which results in sleeplessness
- Decreased sense of safety
- Decreased appetite
- Behavior and personality changes (i.e. social to anti-social)
- Anger
- Guilt
- Increased irritability
- Decrease in academic achievement