

Signs That a Child May Need Professional Help

This is a handout for parents and school staff.

Any of these signs may be present initially in grief... pay attention if these persist over time. If you are concerned about a child, parents and the school counselor should talk together to see if they are seeing the same signs. Try not to over state your case. Most parents and school staff will welcome the honest observations and concern. It is helpful to have a list of local resources, should parents wish to seek professional help.

Physical Signs:

- Changes in eating (*less or more*)
- Changes in sleep (*less or more*)
- Significant loss of energy
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Stomach Aches

Emotional Signs:

- Persistent anxiety
- Hopes of reunion with deceased
- Desire to die
- Clinging to others
- Absence of all grief
- Strong resistance to forming new attachments
- Expression of only negative or only positive about the deceased

Behavioral Signs:

- Aggression, displays of power
- Withdrawn, regression
- Overachieving syndrome
- Inability to focus, concentrate
- Self destructive
- Excessive daydreaming
- Compulsive care-giving
- Accident-prone
- Stealing, other illegal activities
- Use/abuse of drugs/alcohol
- Unable to speak of the deceased

Cognitive Signs:

- Inability to concentrate
- Confused or distorted thinking

Any signs of long-term or clinical depression are red flags, as are your own "gut feelings" about whether a child is really struggling with more than just the profound sadness which typifies "normal" grief.