

GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS & CARERS

A CHILD'S REACTIONS TO LOSS AND AGE-APPROPRIATE SUPPORT [11 TO 20 YEARS OLD]

Each child's grief is unique. Children tend to have certain basic needs and reactions to loss depending on their age. The information below gives details and suggests 'What You Can Do' to support them. Some children display only a few of these reactions; some carry on as if nothing unusual has happened and others exhibit every response imaginable.

Age	Basic Behaviour and Needs	How They React to Loss	What You Can Do (parent/carer response)
Young Teenagers: 11 to 13 Years	• Wants to be accepted and respected • Seeks autonomy; assumes more responsibility for self • Struggles to establish a personal identity • Self-conscious of their family being different • Considers peers more important than adults; seeks greater intimacy with peers • Loneliness depression • Empathetic to one parent	• Worry about custody arrangements • Withdraws from friends and activities; academic decline or indifference • Displays range of negative behaviour: lying, cheating, stealing • Feels powerless, insecure, vulnerable • Appetite and sleep changes (often excessive fatigue) • Hostile to one parent, empathetic to other parent after separation or divorce • Demands explanation from adults • Ashamed family is different or changed because of separation, divorce, the death of a parent, chronic illness or imprisonment • Headaches, stomach-aches, depression, extreme anger	• Create time for communication; set aside special times to talk and listen • Honestly answer all questions • Affirm feelings; teach positive coping methods • Seek help from counsellors/therapists, • Encourage healthy adult friendships with teachers, youth-club leaders, sports coach • Allow more personal freedom and choice making • Ensure home setting is comfortable, inviting

Age	Basic behaviour and Needs	How They React to Loss	What You Can Do (parent/carer response)
Adolescents and Young Adults: 14 to 20 Years	• Moody; often expresses negative ideas or feelings as a way of testing their own belief and those of others • Overwhelmed with additional responsibilities • Craves peer approval; prefers friends to family • Frequent mood swings • Embarrassment of parents' sexuality	• Denies inner turmoil following separation or divorce • Conflicting loyalties between custodial and non-custodial parents • Sensitive to family tensions • Experiences flashbacks to traumatic event • Experiments with drugs and alcohol • Drawn to troubled peers and possible gang involvement • Experiments with sexual activity • Decline in academic performance • Depression (often severe); withdraws from family and friends • Aggressive behaviour • Craves material good to compensate for loss	• Reassure the teenager of your love and concern • Establish fair limits and expectations • Encourage communication; set aside special times to be alone with the teenager • Seek additional support from family and friends • Seek professional counselling or therapy, if needed

Guidance for other age groups are available, please ask your Rainbows Co-ordinator for copies.

For further information about Rainbows Bereavement Support, please visit our website: www.rainbowsgb.org

GUIDANCE 4C - 11 – 20 YEARS OLD

