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Understanding Death and Grief for Children Three and Younger

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Abstract

Although the average toddler's cognitive skills may be limited, children three and younger have emotional responses to the death of someone they

have known. Theories and research indicate that children's individual characteristics, their developmental stage including cognitive level, and their environmental and familial experiences must be considered to understand their grief. Myriad misconceptions and euphemisms can complicate and exacerbate children's grief. The authors address the possibilities for age-appropriate, theory-based interventions by clinicians and parents to effectively assist children three and younger in their grief work.

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