

Concept of Death	Death is seen as temporary, reversible, contagious. May conceptualize that the person is asleep. Death can be perceived as abandonment.
Grief Response	Intense, brief response. React to changes in routine and care. Ask repeated questions. Anxious about basic needs being met. Increased fear of abandonment or fear of being alone. May see processing through play, acting out what they learned has happened, or increased aggression in play.
Signs of Distress	Regression (lapses in toilet training, returning to security blanket or old toys). Anxiety at bedtime. Fear of abandonment. Seek physical contact. Irritable, tantrums.
How You Can Support	Simple, honest explanation of death: "when someone's body stops working, they no longer eat, sleep or play." Reassure their safety and security, and who is in their life to provide this security (parents, caregivers, trusted adults). Expect need for repetition of conversation or explanation. Be aware of magical thinking - thinking their actions caused the death. Provide physical comfort. Consistent routine. Allow some regression.