

# Khululeka

## Grief Support for Children and Youth

### Information on Grief for Counsellors

As a counsellor you will need to be aware of your own experience of grief so that you do not feel overwhelmed by the children's pain and feel helpless.

You will need to develop mechanisms to contain your pain and be clear about how much of your own emotion you are willing to show. It is OK to have tears in your eyes, but not to weep and sob uncontrollably or leave the room.

Please be aware that grief counselling is not like any other counselling. If you have grieving clients particularly children, you may want to consider some further training on grief counselling and also familiarize yourself with some of the cultural practices that affect your client.

#### **Understanding about children's grief**

Children go through different phases and are often confused about that is happening with them. Frequently they feel isolated and end up isolating themselves even more by being angry and rude or withdrawn.

To begin with the child will probably feel shock and numbness, not feel anything at all and not believe what has happened.

They might not sleep at night and wet their beds, act out and be explosive and angry. They might more often be ill, have tummy aches, headaches and rashes and not like to eat their food. The body's immune system is usually weaker at the time of a loss that is why they are more susceptible to viruses and have colds and flu.

They might not be able to concentrate at school and find it hard to do their homework.

They often feel empty inside, sad and tearful and then suddenly seem to be quite happy and normal. These mood swings are natural.

They might feel guilty about the death (children often do) thinking they have somehow caused it.

All this is normal.

#### **What to watch out for:**

Children that have had a number of losses.

Children that are in families where there has been a death of another child.

Children that don't get out of bed.

Children that have stopped attending school.

Children that are using drugs.

More information on [www.khululeka.org](http://www.khululeka.org)

