<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGES</th>
<th>LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING</th>
<th>REACTIVE BEHAVIORS</th>
<th>NEEDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2 AND UNDER | • Can sense that something is different at home.  
• Does not yet understand what death is.  
• Probably won’t remember the person who died. | • Fussiness  
• Clinging to adults  
• Regressive behavior | • Non-verbal care (such as hugs and rocking)  
• Stable routine |
| 2 – 5 (GREEN) | • Sees death as temporary – believes person will return.  
• Don’t fear death, but fear separation.  
• Usually can’t comprehend the concepts of heaven, afterlife or soul.  
• Feels sadness, but often periods of grief are interspersed with normal playing behavior.  
• Substitutes attachment from the deceased person to another person.  
• May not remember the person who died. | • Regression (bed wetting, thumb sucking)  
• Fear of separation  
• Nightmares  
• Aggression  
• Non-compliance | • Stable daily routine  
• Structure  
• Honesty, use the words “dead” and “died”  
• Answer to questions honestly but simply  
• Love  
• Reassurance  
• To be heard, so listen |
| 6 – 9 (ORANGE) | • Begins to understand that death is permanent.  
• Develops fear of death and of others dying.  
• May feel guilt and blame self for death; see it as punishment for bad behavior.  
• Magical thinking; may see self as cause of death. | • Grief ebbs and flows  
• Compulsive care giving  
• Aggression  
• Possessiveness (e.g. of remaining parent)  
• Regression  
• Somatic complaints  
• School phobia  
• Exaggerated fears | • Ways to express their feelings (art, writing, etc.)  
• Concrete answers to questions  
• Validation of feelings  
• Love  
• Reassurance that they are not to blame  
• To be heard, so listen |
| 10 – 12 (BLUE) | • Has a realistic view of death and its permanence.  
• Asks specific questions about death, the body, etc. Interested in the gory details.  
• Concerned with practical questions. (Who will take care of me? How will my family’s life style change? Etc.)  
• Identifies strongly with deceased. | • Upset by the disruption in their lives  
• Blame others for the loss  
• Separation anxiety, some denial and/or guilt  
• Difficulty concentrating  
• Decline in school performance  
• Want to be “fixers” | • Permission and outlets to express feelings, including anger, relief, sadness, etc.  
• Validation of feelings  
• Offers of support and assistance and to know who can help them to be heard, so listen, listen, and listen |
| 13 – 18 (PURPLE/TEENS) | • Recognizes that life is fragile; death is inevitable and irreversible.  
• May worry about own death.  
• Often tries not to think or talk about the death.  
• Sometimes hides feelings so as not to look different from peers.  
• Ponders and questions religious and philosophical beliefs.  
• Often angry at the deceased or at people involved in the death (e.g. doctors).  
• Fears the future. | • Aggression, anger  
• Possessiveness  
• Somatic complaints  
• Phobias  
• Increased risk taking  
• Promiscuity  
• Increased drug/alcohol use  
• Defiance  
• Delinquent acts  
• Suicidal ideation | • A trusted adult or peer for support  
• Parental openness in sharing feelings  
• Help in learning to manage feelings  
• Continued emotional support  
• Presence of parents  
• Encouragement of efforts toward independence |