

## DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES AND GRIEF

### Preschool (Toddlers)

- Understand specific concrete information.
- Question concept of death:
  - What is dead?
  - What makes people die?
  - Where do they go when they die?
  - How do dead people sleep, eat, and go to the bathroom?
  - How do you visit a dead person?
- Regard death as reversible and not final.
- Challenge the concept of “forever.”
- Believe that if they are careful, death will not happen to them.

### Ages Five to Nine

- Believe death is a person, spirit, bogeyman, or ghost.
- Enjoy ghost stories but would never go into a cemetery at night because it would be too scary.
- Think death is real but only happens to old people.

### Ages Nine to Ten

- Believe that death is an end to bodily life, is final, happens to all (even to children), is caused by illness, old age, accidents, murder, and suicide.
- Have nightmares about their parents dying.

### Adolescents

- Romanticize and dramatize death, as in literature (*Romeo & Juliet*), music, or films.
- Fantasize about own death and funeral.
- Challenge death by participating in daredevil activities such as drag racing or drug experimentation.