



POINTS TO REMEMBER MEDIATORS OF THIS CHILD'S BEREAVEMENT EXPERIENCE

- Losing a parent suddenly leads to a worse adaptation to loss at one year. It does not lead to lower self-esteem or to less belief in one's ability to control one's environment.
- Having a parent die at home neither increases communication between the children and the dying parent nor portends a better or worse adjustment afterwards.
- In general, the loss of a mother is worse for most children than the loss of a father. This is especially true as one moves through the second year of bereavement. The death of a mother portends more daily life changes and, for most families, the loss of the emotional caretaker for the family.
- Mother loss is associated with more emotional / behavioural problems including higher levels of anxiety, more acting-one behaviour, lower self-esteem, and less belief in self-efficacy.
- Mother loss brings about more connection with the dead parent.
- The functioning level of the surviving parent is the most powerful predictor of a child's adjustment to the death of a parent. Children with a less well-functioning parent will show more anxiety and depression, and sleep and health problems.
- Bereaved children will have fewer emotional / behavioural problems if discipline is consistently administered and if the surviving parent perceives the child's needs and behaviour in a way that is similar to the child's perception. Inconsistent discipline and perceptual discrepancies will lead to high levels of anxiety in the child.
- Parental dating in the first year of bereavement can be associated with significant problems in the children including withdrawn behaviour, acting-out behaviour, and somatic symptoms. This was especially true when the surviving parent was a father.
- The effects of engagement or remarriage after a suitable bereavement period, on the other hand, can be positive, with children in these families experiencing lower levels of anxiety and depression as well as being less concerned about the safety of the surviving parent.
- Having a number of siblings can have a positive effect in child bereavement. This can mitigate against the negative effects of having a less well-functioning parent. Also, larger families provide a context of safety that gives a child the opportunity and encouragement to express feelings.
- Cohesive families will have children who show less acting-out behaviour and who feel better about themselves than children who come from less cohesive families.

- Families that experience large numbers of concomitant stresses occurring before and after the death will have parents with more stress and depression and children who show more emotional / behavioural problems.
- The best bereavement outcomes occur in families who cope actively rather than passively and in families who can find something positive in a difficult situation.
- Bereaved children did not have more well-developed understandings of death than did control children, despite having experienced the death of a parent.

From: Worden, J.W. (1996). Children and Grief: When a Parent Dies. New York: Guilford Press.

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