

# Clues to Complicated or Unresolved Grief

*Carole and Ronald Krist Samaritan Center for Counseling and Education*

- Can't speak about deceased.
- Minor event triggers intense grief reaction.
- Themes of loss keep coming up in conversations.
- Unwillingness to move things that belonged to the deceased.
- Development of physical symptoms similar to those of the deceased.
- Radical changes in lifestyle to exclude any memories of the deceased.
- Long history of depression.
- False sense of euphoria.
- Compulsion to imitate the deceased.
- Self-destructive impulses.
- Unaccountable sadness occurring at the same time each year.
- Phobia about illness or death.

## **How to Help A Child With Loss**

All children experience loss. Loss is a part of growing up. Although loss always hurts, even a young child can learn that beautiful surprises come wrapped in the "package" of loss. We encourage you to talk about these gifts. Sensitive, caring adults are made, not born.

- Talk about loss whenever the child asks questions.
- Answer honestly and only what's asked.

- Don't use philosophical terms, use plain English.
- Remember, until they are about nine years old, most children don't understand death as permanent.
- Tell the child he or she did not cause a death by anger. (Children confuse the wish with the deed.)
- Take the child to a cemetery or funeral home to visit before death occurs.
- Ask, "What do you wonder about?"
- Talk about your own feelings of sadness when you have experienced loss. Don't shut the child out.
- Don't wait for the one grand "tell it all" session.
- If you are comfortable with death, your child will be also.

## **Resources:**

*The Grieving Child: A parent's guide – Helen Fitzgerald*

## **Storybooks:**

*The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages – Leo Buscalia*

*Rachel and the Upside Down Heart – Eileen Douglas*

*It Must Hurt A Lot – Doris Sanford*