There is no one way to grieve and each member will grieve differently. The age and development level of a member can influence their understanding and reaction to grief and loss. Their responses influence the ability of staff to provide a safe and supportive environment for grieving members. Below is a grief approach guide by developmental level that can help Club staff support grieving members.

### Developmental Approaches to Grief

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Reaction to Grief and Loss</th>
<th>Grief Approach by Club Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2-4 years | - Lack of understanding about death and related concepts  
- Sees death as reversible, not permanent  
- Most aware of changes in patterns of care  
- May ask questions repeatedly  
- May regress, wet the bed or change their sleeping patterns; generally irritable  
- Common statements: “Did you know my mom died, when will she be home?” | - Provide short honest answers  
- Frequently repeat what happened  
- Provide constant reassurance and nurturing  
- Provide consistent routines  
- Provide constant opportunities for play which will be their primary outlet for grief |
| 4-7 years | - Death still seen as reversible  
- May blame themselves because of their own thoughts and wishes  
- Concerned with the process of death and loss, like how and why; general confusion  
- May also have repetitive questions  
- May act like nothing has happened  
- May have nightmares, engage in violent play or take on the role of the person they lost  
- Common statements: “It’s my fault. I was mad and wished she’d die.” | - Engage members in play focused on drawings and stories  
- Encourage expression of energy and feelings through play involving physical activity  
- Encourage members to talk about how they are feeling and their loss |
| 7-11 years | - Death seen as punishment and starting to see it as final; fear of bodily harm  
- Starting to mourn and understand it  
- May have school problems, eat and sleep disturbed and withdraw from friends  
- May have death thoughts and the desire to join the person they lost or self-harm  
- Common statements: “How do I respond?” | - Encourage expression of feelings verbally or through writing or drawing  
- Explain options and allow for choices  
- Be there to give support but allow alone time  
- Allow time for play involving physical activity  
- Listen and make time to talk about loss |
| 11-18 years | - Understands death and mourning  
- May have sadness or denial and engage in risk taking; more willing to talk to others  
- Can have anger and act out  
- May have suicidal thoughts  
- May have role confusion and reject former teachings about death  
- Common statements: “They are gone, I don’t care anymore, what’s the point?” | - Encourage verbal expression of feelings  
- Allow for choices  
- Encourage self-motivation by having them create their own project at the Club  
- Be available and listen  
- Do not minimize grief or take away |

Adapted from The Dougy Center "Developmental Grief Responses" [http://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/developmental-grief-responses/]