

Understanding Children's Experiences of Grief and Change

Life Tales

A companion to Milly's Moving Day

This factsheet supports adults to better understand children's experiences of grief and change, using Milly's Moving Day as a shared reference point. It does not replace professional support.

Instead, it offers insight, reassurance, and practical understanding to help adults respond with calm, connection, and emotional safety.

What This Can Look Like in Children

Grief in children doesn't always look like sadness. Responses are as individual as the child themselves.

It can also present in other ways such as:

- Increased irritability, angry outburst or just feeling angry
- Unexpected defiance and oppositional behaviours
- Demands for control or choice
- Difficulty concentrating or dissociating
- Resistance to new situations or change to routine
- Being withdrawn or regressive behaviours

These responses and more are all normal and adaptive. Behaviour communicates what words cannot yet hold.

Why This Can Feel So Big

Children grieve in layers.

They return to grief again and again as their understanding grows. Change — even positive change — can intensify feelings of loss.

In Milly's Moving Day, Milly's grief exists alongside moments of comfort and curiosity.

What Children Need Most

Children need:

- Permission to grieve in their own way
- Adults who don't rush healing
- Routines that provide stability
- Reassurance that love and grief can coexist

Safety allows grief to soften over time.

Children experiencing loss or major change may:

- Move between emotions quickly
- Appear fine one moment and overwhelmed the next
- Struggle with routines or sleep
- Withdraw or act younger than expected
- Avoid talking about the loss

Support grief by:

- Acknowledging loss without forcing discussion
- Maintaining predictable routines
- Allowing mixed emotions
- Staying emotionally available
- Grief doesn't need fixing — it needs companionship.

A Gentle Reminder

- Grief is not something children "get over."
- Grief is a lifelong, evolving process for children as they understand loss differently at new developmental stages.
- It becomes part of how they carry love forward
- Allow them to ask the same questions repeatedly as they process the information

Some amazing resources to check out!

- Grief Australia

<https://www.grief.org.au/>

- Wombats Wish

<https://wombatswish.org.au/>

- National Centre for Childhood Grief

<https://childhoodgrief.org.au/>

- Feel the Magic

<https://www.feelthemagic.org.au/>

- Kids Grief Support

<https://www.kidsgriefsupport.com/>

- 13 YARN

<https://www.13yarn.org.au/>

Find more resources at
www.ourlifetales.com.au

