



Background Information: Children and Bereavement

The Grieving Process: 5 Stages of Grief

(Note: Stages and their order may vary depending on the person)

Experience of loss

In this phase children:

- may appear to be unaffected by death.
- hold onto the belief that the person will come back.

Denial

In this phase children:

- may be angry at the situation, family members etc.
- may become irritable and aggressive.

Anger

In this phase children:

- may believe that if they are good the person will come back.
- older children/adults may be pre-occupied with "what if" or "if only".

Bargaining

In this phase children:

- may withdraw and not want to talk about the dead person *or* may cry and talk a lot about the dead person.
- may show changes in sleep and eating patterns.

Depression

In this phase children:

- may still experience some feelings of grief from time to time but will move on with their lives.

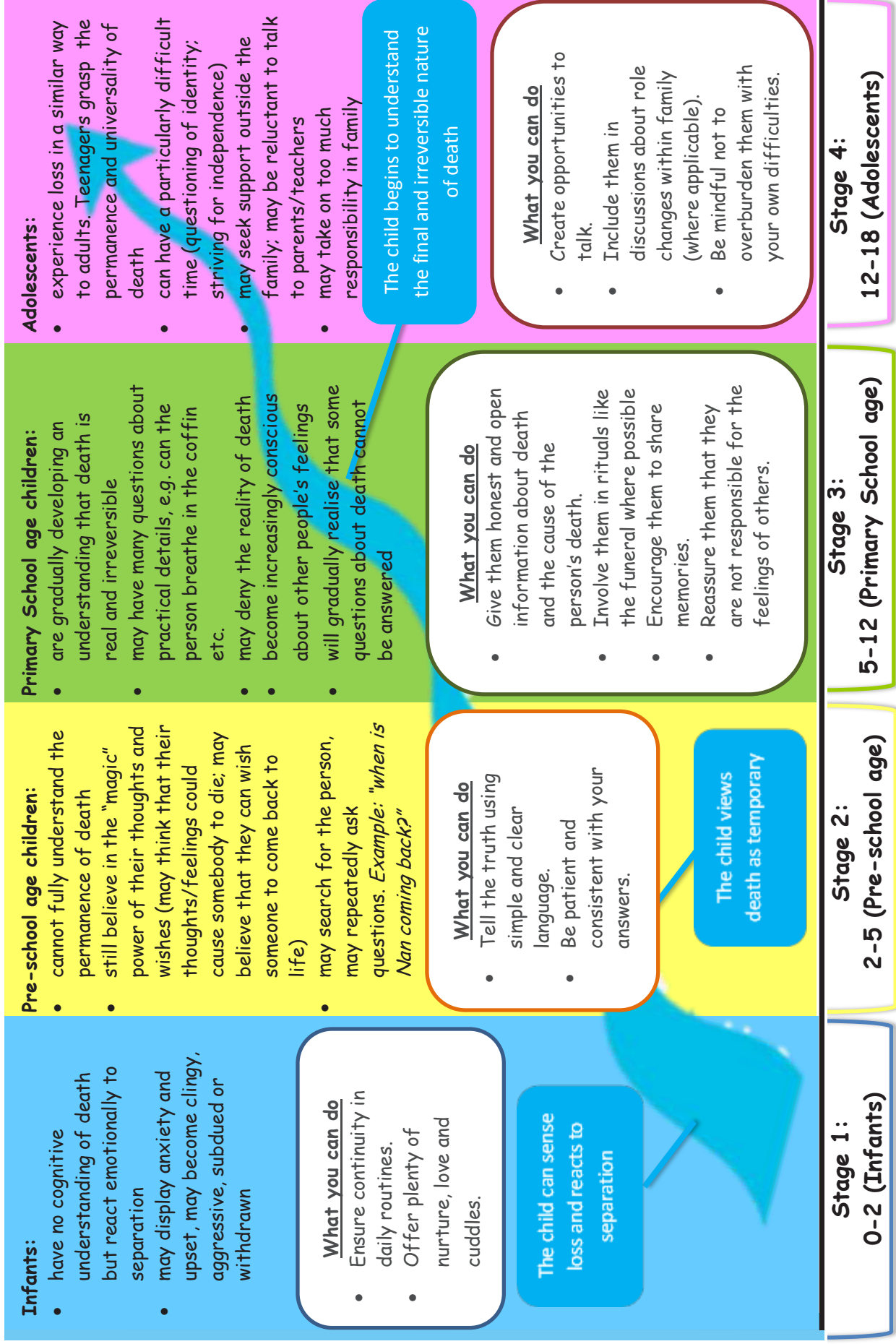
Acceptance

Adapt to new circumstances
and move on

Based on the 5 Stages of Grief Model first published in:

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969) *On Death & Dying*: Routledge, [ISBN 0-415-04015-9](https://doi.org/10.1080/00141801.1969.10558464)

Children's Understanding of Death: Developmental Stages



Please note:

- All ages provided in this Graph are approximate and apply to typically developing children. Children with intellectual disabilities may be at a developmentally younger stage.
- Also: Children in distress may regress to developmentally earlier stages in their understanding of and reaction to death