
Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Wass, H. & Corr, C. (1984). *Childhood and death*. New York: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation.

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Childhood and Death provides an overview of the complexities involved in working with children in this area by providing descriptions of the various ways in which death affects children and the effective intervention techniques that help them to cope. A wide range of specialists in this area provide research, clinical observations and actual case study material.

Five major sections enable the reader to focus quickly and easily on the specific issues. The first section deals with the descriptions of children's concepts of death. It is presented in a developmental format and related to Piaget's theory of concept development. There is, however, a definite lack of information in the adolescent area of development. The next part of this section deals with the fears and anxieties that children experience related to death.

The second section discusses the process of dying, involving not only the dying child but also others affected by the dying child such as the doctor, the non-medical caregivers, the child's parents, the siblings and peers and the staff in the medical setting or home care program.

The third section presents an overview of the bereavement issues: the child's patterns of mourning, the caregiver's role in facilitating the bereavement process, and parents' needs in mourning the death of their child. Three specific types of infant death are considered: stillbirth, neonatal death and sudden infant death syndrome.

The fourth section addresses the increasing incidence of child and adolescent suicide over the past two decades. The information is focused on two specific issues: the suicidal fantasies and preoccupations in pre-teenage children and the treatment of adolescent suicide.

The fifth section supports the need to establish or maintain death-related education programs within the general process of nurturing and educating children. Three major educational contexts are presented: the home, the pre-school and elementary school settings and the secondary schools. The authors are not suggesting that the responsibility for these programs exist only in the hands of the educators but rather it is the responsibility of our whole society. The need to create and facilitate "teachable moments" is strongly emphasized by the authors of that chapter. The last chapter in this section is directly related to the needs of adolescents and is well done.

An extensive resource section at the end of the book provides further sources of information for adults, children, and adolescents. There is also a list of organizational and audiovisual resources on this topic.

Even though this book lacks sufficient information specific to adolescents, it is a good source of "technical information combined with practical richness that helps to make it an invaluable reference."