



A program of
Children's Home of Detroit

The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children

900 Cook Road • Grosse Pointe Woods • MI 48236 • 313-885-0390 • 877-306-5256

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Grief vs. Trauma

GRIEF

Generalized reaction...SADNESS

Grief reactions are generally known to the public and the professional

Grief generally does not attack or "disfigure" our identity

In grief, guilt says, "I wish I would/would not have..."

In grief dreams tend to be of the person who died

Grief reactions can stand alone

In grief, pain is related to the loss

In grief, a child's anger is generally not destructive

TRAUMA

Generalized reaction...TERROR

Trauma reactions, especially in children, are largely unknown to the public and often to professional counselors as well.

Trauma generally attacks, distorts, and "disfigures" our identity

Trauma guilt says, "It was my fault. I could have prevented it. It should have been me"

In trauma, dreams are about the child, himself, dying or being hurt

Trauma reactions generally also include grief reactions

In trauma, pain is related to the tremendous terror and an overwhelming sense of powerlessness and fear for safety

In trauma, a child's anger often becomes assaultive (even after non-violent trauma, fighting often increases)