



By Gregory Ramey, PhD, child psychologist at Dayton Children's and *Dayton Daily News* columnist

Questions from readers

Question:

My husband died 2 years ago, and I'm afraid his death is still having an impact on my 10 year old daughter. She has changed from an outgoing, friendly and loving child to a quiet, serious and unhappy youngster. I took her to three or four counseling sessions after my husband's death, but it didn't help. Does she just need more time?

Answer:

The unexpected death of a parent is one of the most traumatic events in the life of a young child. While you indicated that you took your daughter to counseling, I'm not surprised that you didn't see any effects after only a few sessions.

The dramatic changes in your daughter's personality could be due to a number of reasons. I'm sure there is an intense degree of sadness, perhaps also mixed with guilt, confusion, and anxiety. Many youngsters worry about the health of the surviving parent after one parent dies unexpectedly.

Get your daughter back into counseling, and be sure that you are involved in those sessions. Make certain you work with a therapist who is experienced with grief issues with young children.

Question:

My son is coming home from college in a couple weeks, and I'm already dreading the summer. When he returned home after his freshman year, I couldn't wait for him to go back to school. He thought he could do whatever he wanted on his own schedule. He kept telling us that he was an adult, and we kept responding that it was "our house, our rules." Is there any way to avoid a summer of turmoil?

Answer:

It is a difficult transition for both parents and kids when college students return home for the summer. Your son is use to being on his own, rather than abiding by the rules in your family. At the same time, simply because he is legally an adult does not entitle him to say, do and act any way he wants in your house.

Speak with him before he comes home for the summer. Make sure your expectations are clear, specific, and reasonable. Since he is an adult, he can now choose to either stay home with his family for the summer, or make other living arrangements if he finds your rules unacceptable.

Question:

My sixth grade daughter is boy crazy. She notices the boys in malls, TV commercials, and talks incessantly about how “cute” they are. I know this is normal at her age, but it just seems way too much for me.

Answer:

At your daughter’s age, some youngsters express such a strong interest in boys as a way to escape from family difficulties, failure at school, and lack of achievement. However, if your daughter is doing well in school, has a strong self concept based upon achieving well in many areas, and has good friends, I wouldn’t be too concerned.

Stays focused on her peer relationships and do whatever you can to foster good relationships with kids who are positive, high achieving and moral.

Gregory Ramey, Ph.D., is a child psychologist and vice president for outpatient services at The Children’s Medical Center of Dayton. For more of his columns, visit www.childrensdayton.org/ramey.