

# CHILDREN'S RESPONSES AFTER A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MURDER-SUICIDE

**Children grieve differently than adults. Keeping these differences in mind may help you understand a child's or teen's reactions following a domestic violence murder-suicide and ensure they are getting the support they need.**

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## REGRESSION AND CHANGES IN BEHAVIORS

*Regression can happen at any age. Children and teens may have trouble sleeping, attaching to others, or they may experience separation anxiety from their caregiver. Children may act out or have angry outbursts at school or home. Adolescents may engage in risky behavior and want to numb themselves with drugs or alcohol.*

## PLAY AND ART

*Children and teens may process their loss and express their feelings through play and art. You may see them act out what happened in their play or art.*

## THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

*Children and teens may suppress their thoughts and feelings. They may not share their thoughts with other family members, fearing they may be unacceptable thoughts. For example, "If mom had not tried to leave, none of this would have happened."*

## IDENTITY CONFLICTS

*Children and teens may feel conflicted about having feelings of care, love and loss for both parents after a domestic violence murder-suicide. They may worry that they are betraying a parent by grieving the other parent. They may also worry they have inherited "badness" or "sickness" from a parent.*

## GUILT AND REGRET

*Children and teens may experience guilt following the murder-suicide. They may relive the incident or feel they could have prevented the incident. They may feel that they did not do enough to save the person.*

## SOCIAL STIGMA

*Children may be afraid to talk about what happened with their friends. They may be teased or bullied at school if classmates know what happened. Classmates and friends may ask them intrusive questions.*

## CHILDREN ARE RESILIENT

*Studies show the presence of a strong, caring figure in the lives of children who have experienced trauma can help them heal. Other factors that help are effective coping skills, bonding with trusted adults, having a safe place to go outside the home, and healthy sibling relationships. The additional support of a therapist specializing in grief and trauma can help build resilience in children.*

***We are here to support you and help you locate resources!***

 **Kate's Club** (404) 347-7619  
katesclub.org

 **Georgia  
Commission on  
Family  
Violence** 404-657-3412  
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