

J. William Worden

Parental Loss: Comparing Death and Divorce

How does the loss of a parent through divorce differ from the loss of a parent through death? There are many similarities in the reaction of school-age children to the breakup of the home via these two causes and similar adjustments that the family must make to accommodate to changes in family structure and role allocations. There are also unique features that distinguish these two types of loss, and these will be identified and discussed.

Learning Objectives

1. To understand how the loss of a parent through divorce differs from losing a parent to death.
2. To identify age and gender differences in accommodating to these two types of loss.
3. To explore what makes children adapt better to parental loss.



J. William Worden, PhD, ABPP, is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and holds academic appointments at the Harvard Medical School and at the Rosemead Graduate School of Psychology in California. He is also Co-Principal Investigator of the Harvard Child Bereavement Study, based at the Massachusetts General Hospital. Recipient of 5 major NIH grants, his research and clinical work over 40 years has centered on issues of life-threatening illness and life-threatening behavior. Dr. Worden has lectured and written on topics related to terminal illness, cancer care, and bereavement. He is the author of *Personal Death*

Awareness; Children & Grief: When a Parent Dies; and is co-author of *Helping Cancer Patients Cope*. His book *Grief Counseling & Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, now in its fourth edition, has been translated into 14 foreign languages and is widely used around the world as the standard reference on the subject.