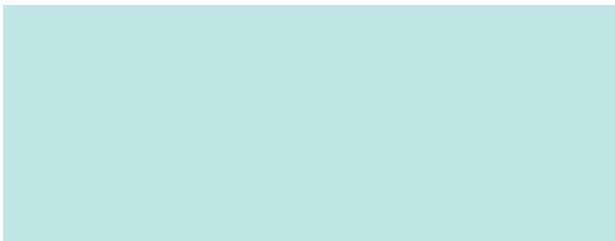
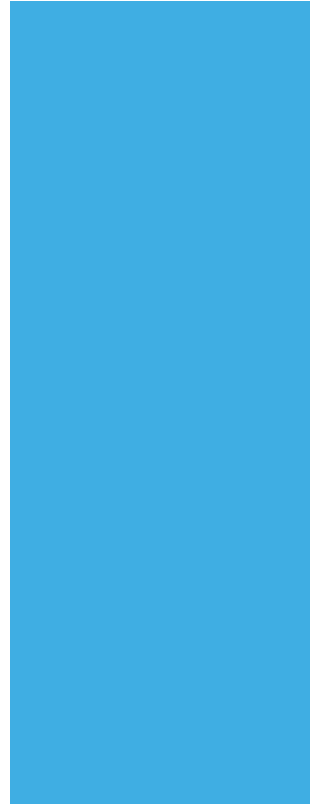


Supporting a Friend Who is Grieving Information for Teens



Grief is a natural response to love and loss. When a friend has had someone important to him/her die, you may not know what to do. What do you say? How can you help? This brochure is designed to help you know how to assist your friend who is grieving.



Some things your friend may be going through:

- Having many different feelings, some at the same time.
- Wanting to talk about the person who died and how that person died.
- Not wanting to talk.
- Lower energy. Grief is hard work! Your friend may not be eating or sleeping well.
- Needing support. Your friend may need or want someone there for him/her at the funeral or memorial service for comfort or to help.

Friends who are grieving experience a variety of feelings; sometimes in succession, sometimes at the same time. You can help friends identify and express these feelings, which can include:

Helplessness

Sadness

Hopelessness

Guilt

Fear

Confusion

Emptiness

Restlessness

Despair

Irritability

Low motivation

Low energy

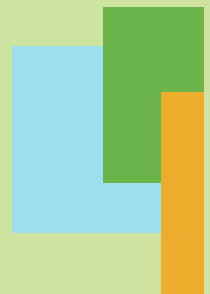
Loneliness

Anger

Shock

Inability to concentrate/focus

Increased/decreased appetite &/or sleep



How you can help your grieving friend:

It is natural for friends to want to help a friend who is hurting feel better. While you cannot fix what your friend is going through, you can help by being someone who will listen and be okay with your friend feeling sad, confused, or angry.

Sometimes when people don't know what to say or do, they don't do anything. What you say or do is not as important as just being there for your friend.

Unless you have experienced the death of someone close, you may find it difficult to imagine what your friend is going through.

You may

- ...feel helpless,
- ...find yourself avoiding your friend because you don't know what to say or do,
- ...want to help but feel unsure about what to do.

Your friend may ask a lot of questions:

"Why?"

"Could I have done something to keep this from happening?"

"How am I going to go on without him/her?"

"Am I ever going to feel better?"

These questions are typical, but your friend won't expect you to have answers to them.

Trying to find the "right" thing to say when you want to say something comforting can be difficult. Here are some suggestions.

Some helpful things to say:

"I am sad to hear that your dad died."

"I am here to listen if you want to talk about what happened."

"Tell me about (the person who died)." Use his/her name.

"I can't imagine how hard this must be for you."

"I don't know what to say, but I want you to know I'm here for you."

Some unhelpful things to avoid saying:

"I know how you feel."

Even if you have been through something similar, each person's experience and feelings are unique to the individual.

Avoid clichés such as *"Time heals all wounds."* *"He's in a better place."* *"You'll be okay."* *"She would want you to move on."*

Statements such as these dismiss and minimize a person's feelings.

"Try not to think about it."

"It's time to put this behind you and get on with your life."

A grieving person can't help thinking about the person he/she loved and typically doesn't want to forget.

"Be positive."

"You shouldn't feel that way."

A grieving person may need to experience both negative and positive feelings to work through his/her grief. Also, telling someone what he/she should feel can create added stress and promote the idea that he/she is not dealing with the death correctly.

What can you do to help?

Be there to listen if your friend wants to talk about the person who died.

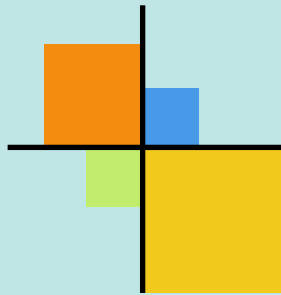
Be there to just sit with your friend, even if he/she doesn't feel like talking.

Offer a hug if your friend looks like he/she needs it.

Let your friend know you're thinking of him/her. Visit, call, or send an e-mail, text message or card.

Invite your friend to go somewhere. Take a walk, watch a movie, share a meal, or play a video game together.

Remember that grief is a process, not an event. Holidays and anniversaries of special events may cause your friend to feel his/her grief all over again.



Going back to school after a death can be very difficult for a friend who is grieving. Facing other students, concentrating on school work, going through typical routines can present special challenges.

You can be supportive of your grieving friend who may be making special adjustments/plans to deal with these challenges. Some of these could be:

- Special requests he/she might have about talking with teachers and other students.
- Does he/she want others to know? Does he/she want to be part of the discussion about what happened?
- Figuring out how to handle questions that other friends and teachers might ask.
- Determining some options if he/she were to become upset and unable to remain in the classroom. For example: Where could he/she go? To whom could he/she talk?
- Working out a plan for keeping up with schoolwork. Can you help with note-taking if your friend has difficulty concentrating? Can you work together on homework projects?

Signs that additional assistance/referral is needed

A friend who:

- is depressed or withdrawn;
- begins or resumes cutting;
- shows aggression or has frequent emotional outbursts;
- makes verbal or written statements that suggest the friend is at risk to harm self or others;
- has auditory or visual hallucinations;
- is using drugs or alcohol;
- shows dark content in assignments or creative projects;
- has experienced multiple losses in a relatively short period of time;
- has an adult caregiver who is overwhelmed by grief and who may be unable to attend to the friend's grief journey as well.



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