

## Tips for Parents Regarding Adolescent Grief

Adolescents do not have the life experiences of adults. They do not have the same tools to manage their grief that we as adults may have acquired. They are looking for adults who validate their feelings, are able to actively listen to them and who normalize their feelings. For many students this may be their first experience with loss. For others it is a reminder of past losses. Either way it will prove extremely difficult for our students.

- **Normal grief includes both sadness and anger.** Students may appear “okay” on the surface however this does not necessarily represent feelings they are experiencing.
- **A teen’s style of grief may differ** depending on the age of the child, relationship to the person who died, suddenness of the death and other factors. It is important to validate all feelings a child experiences associated with the death of a friend and to provide a safe environment to do so.
- **Concentration is extremely difficult as one grieves.** We will see this with students in class. Our goal is to provide structure and stability with sensitivity. Your students may not be able to consistently perform in class. This may be observed for some time after the death.
- **People often grieve in spurts.** You may find that your child seems to be doing okay at one moment and then are struggling immensely the next. This is perfectly normal.
- **Teens want us to be available to them,** but they mostly want to grieve with their peers.
- **Be aware of secondary loss for students.** A new loss will often bring up other losses that our students have gone through. This will create a period of re-grieving.
- **Students who are emotionally vulnerable** cannot tolerate the inner stress that these situations create. They will often ask for additional support during these difficult times.
- **Students look to the adults in their life to model behavior when they feel uncertain.** It is perfectly okay for you to say that you are sad or having a hard time. Give students permission to grieve.

Please reach out to school counseling if at any time you have questions, are concerned about a student. You play such an important role in their lives. This is a difficult time and the effort you are giving forth to help support them is invaluable.