

Dear Parents,

Below you will find general grief support tips to help you help your child. Every child is different and will have their own way of expressing their feelings; you know your child better than anyone. Hopefully, the information below will allow you to help your child through the grieving process.

- **Talk and listen.** This is the greatest need. Sometimes parents don't talk about death thinking they will spare their child some of the pain and sadness. However, teenagers will grieve anyway. Give honest and specific answers to questions about death and dying. Don't be afraid to convey your spiritual values about life and death. They may appear to be "back to normal," but asking them about their feelings is better than waiting for them to volunteer this information.
- **Respect their process.** Generally, the grief process is made up of five stages: denial, bargaining, anger, depression, and acceptance, though not necessarily in this order nor with set times. Avoid saying "You should be over this by now" or similar phrases. The grief process is a very unique and personal process and we all grieve at our own pace.
- **Let them have their feelings.** You may be surprised at how a teen reacts to a death of a relative or close friend. Their feelings may be many and mixed: confusion, sadness, anger, guilt, relief, numbness. Reassure them that their feelings are normal and okay, whatever they are.
- **Their daily routine should be as normal as possible.** Going to school, doing homework, assuming normal home responsibilities and going places with their friends should be maintained. If not, encourage/require them to do so.
- **Be sensitive to possible triggers.** Holidays, birthdays, and certain happenings that bring up memories of the deceased may be painful. Recognize this ahead of time, and do what you can to minimize the pain or sadness. For example, when a classmate dies, events such as holidays, prom, or graduation might be difficult.
- **Cut them a break.** Some children may be having a hard time holding it together, so it's natural that they might not be functioning at top level. If they seem distracted, moody, or short-tempered, that's to be expected. This will be difficult at times, and sometimes parents look back at situations and wish they had acted differently. If this happens to you, use this opportunity to talk with your child about how you wish you had reacted and about their grief.
- **Seek help** if your teenager seems to be having a difficult time managing "day-to-day life." Ask a relative, friend, minister, or your high school counselor to support your child.
- **Be aware of the community resources listed at the bottom**

For many of you, this may be a review for what you are already doing for your child. But for some parents, this may be your first experience of helping your child grieve a loss. Please call your child's class counselor with any further concerns that you may have.

Sincerely

Student Services Department at Fenwick High School

Resources

Thrive Crisis Line available 24/7--1-708-383-7500

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline—1-800-273-8255

Crisis Text Line- text “listen” to 741741

Catholic Charities LOSS group support

<https://www.catholiccharities.net/GetHelp/OurServices/Counseling/Loss.aspx>

Pillars Community Health- Buddy’s Place

<https://pillarscommunityhealth.org/services/behavioral-health-and-support-services/buddys-place-grief-support/>

Helpful Websites

www.whatsyourgrief.com

<https://www.pinterest.com/PillarsCommunityHealth/grief-resources/>