

# Helping Children and Teens Cope with Grief and Loss

## Common Reactions and Warning Signs for Children and Teens Experiencing Grief and Loss:

- Changes in eating, sleeping, or playing patterns
- Physical reactions (complaining of headaches, stomachaches, etc.)
- Acting out behaviors
- Appearing fine (acting like nothing happened)
- Increased irritability
- Regressed behaviors such as bedwetting
- Increased worry about future for themselves or others
- Change in ways they interact with peers
- Fear of separation from caregiver (more attached)
- Low interest in activities with friends or family
- Difficulty paying attention
- Avoiding talk about the person that died or reminders of them or talking about them a lot

These are all normal reactions to grief and loss. It is helpful to educate your child that they are having a normal reaction to loss. However, when these symptoms continue for a longer time frame, it is important to contact your school counselor so that they can assist your student at school and give you community resources for outside counseling.

## 5 Important Ways to Help Grieving Children and Teens

1. Provide information and education at their developmental level.
2. Give plenty of opportunities for them to express their feelings.
3. Communicate and listen to their concerns.
4. Give opportunities for them to remember.
5. Provide opportunities to meet with grieving peers.

### What to do:

- Be patient. Everyone heals from grief and loss at their own pace.
- Maintain a schedule.
- Be factual. Give information that is age appropriate for your child.
- Allow your child to draw, write, or play out how they feel. Communicating can be hard during times of grief.
- Seek help and support from your child's school counselor and other professionals.

### What not to do:

- DO NOT try to rush children to return to the way they were before the loss.
- DO NOT stop them from talking about what happened.
- DO NOT ignore changes in their behavior.
- DO NOT introduce major changes within the first 6-8 weeks following their experience.
- DO NOT hesitate to ask for help from others.
- DO NOT forget to take care of yourself too during this time of loss.

For more information visit:

[www.tlcinstitute.org](http://www.tlcinstitute.org), [www.NCTSN.org](http://www.NCTSN.org),  
or contact your Child's School Counselor