

Tips for Parents: Helping Students Cope with Grief & Loss

- Be available and present to your student
- Listen (with your ears, eyes, and heart)
- Let your student know that you know that a loss has happened and that you care.
- Allow and encourage your student to freely express her/his feelings of grief, shock, fear, etc. (this may include crying, talking, writing, etc.)
- Allow your student to ask any questions. Don't think that you have to have the answers because we don't have the answers to a lot of the difficult questions. Just being able to voice our questions helps.
- Acknowledge the reality that grief hurts. Do not attempt to rescue your student or yourself from the hurt. Having the courage to face the hurt together strengthens our relationships and is a comfort.
- Respect your student's need to grieve and to share her/his feelings (or to choose not to share feelings – all in her or his own time).
- Maintain a routine and normal activities when possible. Continuity becomes a safety net that provides reassurance and a sense of stability amidst this time of facing an unexpected tragedy.
- Understand that our children and young people will continue to deal with the losses and changes that they experience. They will not get over it, but they can learn to grow through the grief and discover that love will sustain them and not go away.
- Seek the support of school staff, your extended family, your faith community, and other professional caregivers if you think your child will benefit from this additional support.
- If you seek to comfort your student, say the right thing or say nothing (silence is OK!). Some suggestions are:

Best things to say:

1. I love you!
2. I am here for you (and then be together).
3. Tell me how you are doing (and then listen).

Worst things to say:

1. It was God's plan.
2. I know how you feel.
3. It happened for a reason.

Tips for Students: How to Cope with Grief & Loss

- Remember that everyone reacts to pain and loss in different ways.
- Allow yourself to freely express your feelings (this may include crying, talking, writing, etc.).
- Seek out a parent, friend, or caring adult to share your feelings with.
- Be careful of postings on social media. Only post what is helpful and encouraging to all. Do not post or participate in rumors, gossip, blaming or judging.
- Take care of yourself. Eat well. Get plenty of sleep and exercise.
- Spend time around the people who care about you and who you feel supported by.
- Find space and time to do the things that help you handle stress and grief. Some examples are:
 - Talk to someone
 - Cry
 - Write a letter
 - Keep a journal
 - Read a book
 - Help someone else
 - Run, dance, take a walk or ride a bike
 - Listen to music