

Dealing with Loss

Parents' Guide for Secondary



Bereavement in young people

Grieving is a natural part of recovering from a bereavement, and everyone's experience of grief is different. There are no rules about what we should feel, and for how long. Here are a few tips to help you support your son/daughter.

Keep it simple

When we talk to someone who has been bereaved, we try to bring comfort and 'say the right thing'. Sometimes just asking 'how are you?' and listening rather than talking is more effective – no words we can say to a grieving teenager will make the death of someone they were close to easier to bear.

Be available

Be available but let your son/daughter take the lead on when and where to talk. They may prefer to talk to their friends – this is natural and normal. Teenagers can be very supportive of each other and it might be helpful to make opportunities for them to get together. Sometimes the bereavement of one person can trigger memories of a relative that may have died in the past. This can be an opportunity to talk about the past and bring healing to the events

Maintain dialogue

When there is a death of someone important some young people will need support from their parent/carer, however many will lean more on their friends. As a parent you can support your daughter by encouraging contact with friends at a time when they may have little energy to motivate themselves.

Coping mechanisms

Dealing with grief can be a time for young people to develop their resilience skills. Encouraging them to acknowledge their own feelings and thoughts by listening to them. Suggesting someone they can talk to can often help them to process their feelings. Young people can be a support to their peers and parents/carers can be a guide so they are not overwhelmed. Take the opportunity to share your experience and particularly how you overcame difficult times which can deepen the relationship.

