

# The Grieving Elementary School Student

## Common Behaviors to Expect

- Regression to earlier behaviors
- Fighting, anger
- Difficulty in paying attention and concentrating
- Daydreaming
- Not completing homework or assignments
- Sleepiness
- Withdrawal

## How to Help

- Answer questions as clearly and accurately as possible
- Provide art, journal, music, and dance activities
- Make time for physical outlets, sports, games, walks, etc.
- Help the student identify and use support systems
- Work with the student around academic workload
- Encourage the student to take a break and have some alone time
- Allow for expression of feelings and emotions
- Maintain routines and structure but allow for flexibility
- Give the student choices whenever possible
- Let the student know you care and are thinking about him/her
- Assign the student a buddy who can work with him/her
- Create a “safe space” that a student can go to when needed

## Common Mistakes: Words and Actions to Avoid

The following words and actions can be harmful to children and teens.

- **DO NOT** suggest that the student has grieved long enough.
- **DO NOT** indicate that the student should get over it and move on.
- **DO NOT** expect the student to complete all assignments on a timely basis.
- **DO NOT** act as if nothing has happened.
- **DO NOT** say things like:
  - “It could be worse, you still have one brother.”
  - “I know how you feel”
  - “You’ll be stronger because of this”

Taken from “Helping the Grieving Student: *A Guide for Teachers*” The Dougy Center for Grieving Children