

The Grieving High School Student

Common Behaviors to Expect

- Withdrawal from parents and other adults
- Angry outbursts
- Increased risk-taking behaviors (substances, reckless driving, sexual behaviors)
- Pushing the limits of rules
- Lack of concentration; inability to focus
- Hanging out with a small group of friends
- Sad face, evidence of crying
- Sleepiness, exhaustion

How to Help

- Allow for regression and dependency
- Encourage expression of feeling such as sorrow, anger, guilt, regret
- Understand and allow for variation in maturity level
- Answer questions honestly and provide factual information
- Model appropriate responses, showing the students your own grief
- Avoid power struggles and allow choices
- Help students understand and resolve feelings of helplessness
- Assist students with plans for completion of assignment
- Allow for some flexibility in assignments, e.g. be willing to adapt assignments to topics relevant to the student's current experience.

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"