

The Grieving Middle School Student

Common Behaviors to Expect

- Argumentative
- Withdrawal, sullenness
- Anger, fighting
- Sleepiness
- Lack of concentration and attentiveness
- Risk-taking behaviors (drugs, sexual acting out, stealing)
- Unpredictable ups and downs or moodiness
- Erratic, inconsistent reactions

How to Help

- Expect and accept mood swings
- Provide a supportive environment where the student can share, when needed
- Anticipate increased physical concerns including illness and body aches and pains
- Allow the student to choose with whom and how she gets support
- Encourage participation in a support group
- Allow flexibility in completing school work

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”