

The Educator's Guide to the Grieving Student

Do:

- Contact the family after the death
 - Find out what classmates should be told
 - Offer support
- Prepare class for student's return
 - Share info about death
 - Answer questions/concerns
 - Identify helpful/unhelpful things to say & do when the student returns
- Make a plan with the student
 - Establish a safe place to be alone if student needs it
 - Identify a safe person the student may talk with
 - Modify academic expectations as needed
- Be available to listen.
- Follow routines, they provide a sense of safety and comfort.
- Set limits and address risk taking behavior

Do Say:

- "I'm sorry."
- "I know you are sad/angry/in pain..."
- "This must be a hard time for you..."
- "I'm ready to listen if you feel like talking."
- "It can be hard to understand why these things happen."
- "Let's talk about what would make you feel more comfortable in class."
- "Expressing your tears and pain can help you through this hard time."

Do not:

- Act as if nothing happened.
- Expect the student to finish all assignments on time.
- Ask how the student is doing unless you are genuinely sincere, and are prepared to hear the truth.
- Use religious concepts unless they are asked for, and if so, use them very carefully.
- Make statements about how people will or will not feel in the future.
- Assume that the student is coping well, even if he/she appears to be.
- Take a grieving student's anger personally.
- Allow your own emotions to get in the way of being helpful.

Avoid Saying:

- "You will get over it."
- "You should be over this by now."
- "I know just how you feel."
- "You should/shouldn't feel like..."
- "Count your blessings..."
- "Things could be worse..."
- "Your loved one is better off."
- "You'll be stronger for this."
- "Be strong for your mother, siblings, etc."
- "God has a reason for everything, even this."
- "This was God's will."