Greetings! As the second half of the school year continues, I wanted to take a moment to talk about you - the teachers and staff who dedicate yourselves to the wellbeing of your students. Many of you know that Western Reserve Grief Services (WRGS) provides in-school support to students when there is a death in the school community. But we are there to support you too!

Your bond with students is unique, they almost become members of your family. You care for them, watch them grow and address their academic and socioemotional needs. If a student or any member of the school community dies, it comes as no surprise that teachers and staff experience intense grief too. The unfortunate truth is that sometimes teachers and staff do not have the opportunity to seek support or grieve appropriately. Often, teachers and staff experience what is known as disenfranchised grief, a term coined by grief expert Kenneth Doka. He defines disenfranchised grief, as “the grief that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported.” It is grief that society does not always acknowledge. For teachers and staff, disenfranchised grief can result from unrecognized bonds between students and the adults in their school community, and the expectation from many that the focus of support should only be on students.

One teacher described disenfranchised grief as walking on an emotional tightrope. On one hand, you might want to “keep it together” for your students. On the other hand, you are also grieving this death and may find that it could trigger grief reactions from other losses you have experienced. You may find yourself wondering how you should act, if you should “stay strong” for your students or if you should show your grief. The ultimate question becomes: How can teachers and staff grieve in a healthy fashion while providing ongoing support to their students?

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Here are some suggestions and reminders:

- You have the right to grieve the death of a student or someone in your school community.
- You have the right to show your students the grief emotions you are feeling, including crying. Be a role model for healthy grieving!
- Just like your students, you have the right to seek support from outside agencies, like WRGS.
- Offer support to other teachers and staff.
- Practice self-care techniques and share them with your students to help them develop healthy coping skills.
- Be kind to yourself. Grief can be difficult to navigate. Do the best that you can.

While this only briefly touches on the difficulties facing teachers and staff after a death in the school community, I hope that it can open a conversation. For resources or additional information regarding this topic, feel free to contact WRGS. Please remember that we are here for you too! I hope that you have a great rest of the school year.
Together We Can

Grief Camp Information

Western Reserve Grief Services gratefully acknowledges the Ridgecliff Foundation for their support of our school program.

As a Community Partner, Western Reserve Grief Services offers schools, faculty and staff members resources to navigate the painful experience of grief and loss.

Grief Support in Schools
For students and staff before or after the death of a student, staff or community member. This may include administrative consultation, staff support, facilitation of a 6-8 week support groups (S.T.A.R.S.) for students in grades 1-12, or a Forget-Me-Not day retreat.

Classroom Presentations
Interactive classroom presentations, often integrated into a health class curriculum, can be provided to all grade levels with age-appropriate information focusing on natural life spans of all living things, end of life, anticipating a death, common grief reactions, coping, traumatic death and supporting a grieving friend.

Crisis Response
Immediate on-site crisis response is available when a school-related death occurs. All staff are trained and prepared to respond. This service is available to the general school community and provides grief counselors to support school administration, staff, parents and students. This includes strategic planning, large and small group interventions, education and follow-up support.

Staff Training
Professional development opportunities can be tailored to a school’s specific needs. Topics include an overview of grief and loss, anticipatory grief, children and teen grief, traumatic grief, supporting students through loss, grief activities for the classroom and school crisis response.

For more information or to set up a S.T.A.R.S. group, Forget-Me-Not day retreat, classroom presentation, staff training or to access crisis response, please contact Lindsey Neag at lneag@hospicewr.org or 216.210.1523.

School Resources

Red Oak
Three Days
August 4–6, 2020, 9 AM – 3PM
Red Oak Camp, Kirtland, Ohio
This day is for children ages 6–13 who have experienced the death of a loved one. Experienced counselors guide participants in art, nature and other expressive activities.
Fee: $25/camper (scholarships are available)

Riding Through Grief
Five Days
June 22–26, 2020, 9 a.m. to noon
Fieldstone Farm, Chagrin Falls, Ohio
This day camp is offered in collaboration with Fieldstone Farm Therapeutic Riding Center’s trained professionals who work with grieving children. Children ages 8–12 who have experienced the death of a loved one will explore grief issues through fun horseback riding lessons and un-mounted activities.
Fee: $75/camper (scholarships are available)

Grief Camp Information

We offer a variety of camps to meet the grieving needs of children and adolescents. Camps provide the opportunity to be with others who are grieving the death of a loved one. They are expressive in nature and led by experienced facilitators in art, music, play and nature activities. For more information or to register, please contact us at 216.486.6838 or visit hospicewr.org/camps.

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800.707.8922 | hospicewr.org
Serving the Northern Ohio counties of Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Portage, Stark and Summit.

If you do not speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call 216.383.6688.
ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 216.383.6688.
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