

Helping Parents Guide Teens Through the Grief Process

The main objective is to validate feelings and bring hope to the teen who is confused, scared, and sad.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- Teens don't have the life experiences that adults do, and tend not to think like adults.
- Try to enter their world and see things the way they see them.
- Teens need an opportunity to talk, not just be talked to.
- Try to get ahead of the teen's possible questions:
 - "Why can't I feel anything?"
 - "Why do I feel so bad when I hardly knew the person who died?"
 - "How should I be acting at this time?"
 - "Some of my friends are crying and I am not. What is wrong with me?"
 - "How long will these sad feelings last?"
 - "What is normal grief?"

POINTS TO MAKE CLEAR:

- Grief is a unique experience to every person.
- There is no one right way for a person to grieve, but many ways to express grief appropriately.
- We all tend to be on a different time clock for our grief emotions to come out.
- Grief is not time oriented. It is a unique process for all.
- You are grieving because you have a capacity to love, and this is a good thing.

REMEMBER

- Your presence is more important than your words.
- Don't minimize their feelings. Never start a sentence with "at least."
- Be honest. If you don't know an answer to a question, admit you don't know.
- Grief is not the problem. Grief is the solution. Let them feel their pain and don't try to "fix" them.

IF THEY DON'T HURT, THEY WON'T HEAL.

- Don't force teens to talk, but reassure them you are ready when they are and will check in from time to time to see if they want to talk to you.



Dave Opalewski is President of Grief Recovery Inc., in Saginaw, Michigan, a certified Death and Dying and Suicide Prevention Instructor for Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. He is also a certified support group facilitator and child trauma specialist, along with being a 33 year veteran of K-12 education. Mr. Opalewski has published several books and is a highly sought after speaker.

A helpful resource
for guiding teens
through grief

