



Helping Secondary Youth Deal with Grief and Loss

Here are some things that parents/guardians can do to support youth dealing with death.

CHECK FACTS:

- Give accurate information about what happened. Tell only what you know to be confirmed.
- Answer questions honestly, providing only as much detail as requested.
- Be aware that repeated viewing of the media coverage of the death can be traumatizing.
- Check out what has been heard about the death and correct any misinformation or rumours. “Tell me what you have heard . . .” is a good conversation opener. Be aware of the kind of information exchange happening through social media.

CHECK FEELINGS:

- Ask your youth how he/she is feeling.
- Tell him/her that feelings of anger, sadness, guilt, fear, relief are all common.
- Be aware that this kind of news and these strong feelings can lead to: nightmares, irritability, stomach aches, loss of appetite, lack of interest in normal activities, desire to be alone. Self-criticism, displaced anger, decline in school performance, and participation in at-risk behaviours may also occur. These are all common reactions under these circumstances and are usually temporary.

EMPOWER:

- Encourage your youth to attend school.
- Invite your youth to talk about the person that he/she has lost.
- Help your youth identify what he/she has done in tough or sad situations before and how it has helped.
- Remind him/her that you know he/she is strong and has coped with difficult situations in the past.
- Facilitate opportunities for him/her to engage in healing activities such as: talking to friends or relatives, getting together with peers, writing in a journal, drawing or painting, listening to music, participating in sports, going to a memorial service, making a memory book or collage, planting a flower or tree. Follow his/her lead.

MONITOR:

- Monitor chat line/msn/Facebook, etc. use.
- Monitor risk-taking behaviour such as use of alcohol and drugs, violence, sexual promiscuity, and self-harm.
- Watch for signs that your child may need professional help to cope with this loss:
 - Normal living patterns do not resume over time
 - A continuation of nightmares or need to talk about the death
 - A continuation of feelings of anxiety, insecurity and/or fear
- Seek support from your Family Doctor, Hospice, Child and Youth Mental Health, school counsellors, and/or or community support agencies. Your school counsellor can help with recommendations if needed.

**REMEMBER THAT CHILDREN ARE REMARKABLY RESILIENT.
WITH LOVE AND SUPPORT, THEY DO RECOVER FROM THE VERY SAD AND TRAGIC EVENTS THAT LIFE CAN
THROW THEIR WAY.**



Secondary Student Self Care

Taking Care of Yourself

It is important for each of you to take care of yourself and each other during this very difficult time.

Be Aware That:

- It is common to have feelings such as: shock, sadness, anger, guilt, fear.
- You might experience nightmares, irritability, stomach aches, loss of appetite, fatigue. These are normal and are usually temporary.
- If you feel numb or don't notice any of the above symptoms, that's ok too.
- You may want to talk about this difficult experience a lot, you may not.
- You may remember other losses or difficult times in your life and some of the feelings may return.
- Grief is different for everyone. It is okay for it to take a long time or a short time. Be patient with yourself and others.
- It is okay for friends and family to see that you are struggling to deal with this loss. You can share what you find helpful if you choose.
- Drugs and alcohol can intensify feelings and make it more difficult for you to cope.

Know What Helps:

- Look after yourself. Drink lots of water, eat healthy food, and get as much sleep as you need.
- Connect with the people who are the "rocks" in your life (family members, friends).
- It's also okay to spend time alone, if that is what helps.
- Make time for activities that help when you are troubled or stressed: journaling, reading, hanging out with friends, playing sports, listening to music.
- Trust yourself. We generally know what we need to do to take care of ourselves; we just don't always do it.

Seek Help If Needed:

- You can get more help from:
 - School Counsellors
 - Alberni Hospice Society 250-723-4478
 - BC Bereavement Helpline 1-877-779-2223
 - Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868
 - Suicide Crisis Helpline 9-8-8 or text 9-8-8
 - Kuu-us Crisis Line 250-723-2323

THIS IS A TIME TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF AND EACH OTHER.