



# GRIEF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS

## A Guide for our Schools



When coping and dealing with a sudden loss, children experience grief in different ways at different stages in their development. If you don't know what to expect, their emotions and behaviors may be concerning. While this guide can help you navigate some typical reactions, if you have any concerns, please reach out to a mental health or medical professional.

### POSSIBLE COMMON REACTIONS

#### PRESCHOOL

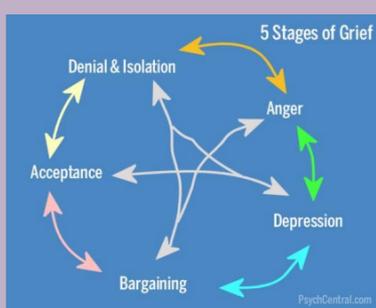
- Sadness & fear
- Regressive behavior
- Interest or play related to death
- Sleep/ nighttime disturbances
- Physical complaints
- Acts as if death never happened
- Crying
- Feeling guilty or worried
- Repetitive questions
- Fighting

#### ELEMENTARY AGE

- Sad, angry, lonely, withdrawn, anxious, fear
- Specific questioning- looking for details about the death
- Irritability
- Aggressiveness/ Acting out
- Changes in grades
- Nightmares/ Sleep disturbances
- Poor concentration
- Withdrawal from activities & friends
- Physical complaints

#### ADOLESCENTS

- Feelings of abandonment and isolation
- Feeling self-conscious about experiencing grief
- Hides feelings
- Acting like death never happened
- Sleeping & eating disturbances
- Mood swings
- Impulsive & high risk behaviors
- Agitation
- Increase in conflict
- Talking about death
- Role Confusion
- Physical complaints
- Change in grades/ attendance/ peer groups



If any of these symptoms are severe or exhibited over an extended period of time, refer for appropriate medical and/or mental health intervention.

### IMPACT ON LEARNING

- Decline in school performance
- Difficulty mastering new material
- More irritable
- More withdrawn
- Less stamina/ tire quickly with academic work
- More anxious or depressed
- More likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors
- Focused on the loss

*\*schoolcrisiscenter.org*

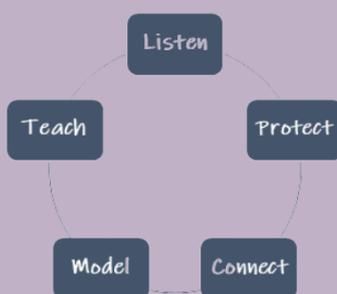
### HOW TO HELP

**Listen-** Just being there and listening to what students have to say can be powerful in the healing process.

**Protect-** From re-traumatization and bullying/ ridiculing of students who are emotional/ crying.

**Connect-** Ask how students are doing; regular check-ins; let them know you are available; positive feedback about their work performance and attendance.

**Teach-** Teach students about grief and trauma so they can monitor and assess their own behavior and learn coping skills.



**Model-** Show how grieving adults react to loss and respond to a crisis. Adults may grieve, but they continue to act with consideration and maintain calm routines at school.

*\*schoolcrisiscenter.org*

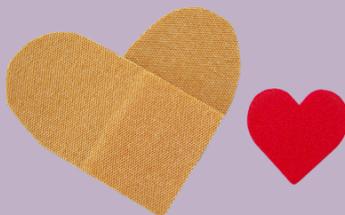
### HEALING ACTIVITIES

**Physical Movement-** Any activity that moves your body: dancing, walking, running, lifting, stretching, sports activities, etc.

**Positive social interactions-** Promotes a sense of belonging, safety and security. Even a simple connection- smiling, a compliment, saying hello can bring comfort.

**Creative Expression-** Includes any activities that you like to do in a creative way, such as cooking, organizing, making music, crafting, art, etc.

**Affection-** a 20 second hug can change your mood, lower your stress, and give you the feeling of home and comfort.



**Laughter-** Nothing works faster and more dependably to bring your mind and body back. It is also the gift that can keep on giving- even thinking about a time that you laughed hard is mood booster!

**A Big Cry-** It's an effective & healthy physical and emotional response that releases toxins and can have a soothing effect.

**Breathing-** Deep breathing exercises are a way to manage feelings and emotions and can be done anywhere discreetly. Example: 4 second inhale, 4 second hold, 4 second exhale, 4 second hold, repeat.

*\*Nagoski & Nagoski*

### RESOURCES

Support should be available to all students during a time of crisis. Ongoing and further support may also be needed for some students.



All 4 Youth is a partnership program between the Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health and Fresno County Superintendent of Schools for children and youth ages 0-22 years old experiencing difficulties that affect them at school and at home. 559-443-4800 M-F

The Fresno County DBH Warm Line provides non-emergency emotional and coping support to community members. Warm line operators provide supportive listening, practical coping ideas, and information on how to get connected to behavioral health services. 559-600-WARM (9276) M-F 8 am - 5 pm



The National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement provides advice 24/7 via phone and email and can provide ongoing support in the immediate aftermath of a crisis. Educational resources and crisis management tools are also available. 1-877-53-NCSCB (1-877-536-2722) info@schoolcrisiscenter.org

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and provides crisis resources for you or your loved ones. 1-800-273-TALK or 1-800-273-8255 Crisis Text line: 741741



### ONLINE RESOURCES

For additional resources click the image below.



# # UNIFIED