



## APTITUD COMMUNITY ACADEMY AT GOSS

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*Rebecca Jensen, Principal*

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Dear Aptitud families,

With deep regret we inform you that our school lost one of our students this past weekend. We are mourning her loss as a community. Please ensure that your child logs in this week to connect with our community.

These kinds of events are difficult to process for young minds. If you notice that your child has mood or behavior changes within the next couple of days, it may be due to the stress of not being able to express his/her emotions. You may need to set aside time to talk with your child about this. Please see the attached resources to support you and your child. Please also be aware of your child's social media accounts. It is helpful to monitor those accounts and set aside time to talk about the interactions children have in these spaces.

If you or your child need support dealing with this loss, please do not hesitate to contact our front office at **408-928-7650**

We have a counseling team ready to provide the needed guidance. We care deeply for the physical and emotional well being of all our students.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Jensen  
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## Parent's Guide to Grieving Children

Children grieve differently than the grown ups in their lives but they really do experience the sadness, anger, guilt, physical symptoms, spiritual questions, and social isolation that comes with grief. As a parent, you are your child's best support during this time. Here are some ideas to help you as you walk with your child through this very difficult time.

**Clarify questions.** Ask something like, "Are you asking where Grandpa's body is now or are you asking what our family believes about what happens to a person after he dies?" The question, "What would you like to know?" helps clarify what your child is asking.

**Tell the truth.** Human development specialist Dr. David Crenshaw writes, "Children can bear the truth, no matter how painful, much more easily than they can handle being deceived." Always be willing to say, "I don't know but I'll help you find out." Do not risk your child learning the truth from friends or the news media; gently explain what happened and be as honest as possible.

**Know that grief is not just emotional.** You may find your child temporarily withdrawn or acting out. He still needs firm boundaries and household (and school) rules still apply, but know sometimes this is how children express the anxiety and anger of grief. She may have difficulty concentrating or daydream more, but all of these changes in behavior are usually short-lived. Talk to your child's teacher if you are concerned.

**Share stories.** If this was your child's classmate, ask questions like, "What did you like best about him/her?" or "What was his favorite game on the playground?" If you have stories about the person's life, share them. Tell about what you liked about the person and what kinds of things you remember doing together.

**Model healthy grieving.** You can't shelter your children from death and grief and that would not help them anyway. What your child needs from you is a healthy model how to grieve rather than an attempt to "protect" them. Allow them to see your tears and sadness, encouraging them to experience grief. Come to terms with your own attitudes and anxieties about death since often, kids are more at ease than we are. Sadness is okay.

**Talk about the funeral in advance.** Explain what will happen using the senses—"You will see and smell some beautiful flowers; which do you think would be Bobby's favorites? or "If you touch Grandma's hands in the casket, they will feel cool and waxy—kind of like a candle." You will hear people talking about John; you will hear some of Grandpa's favorite songs being sung. You will see some people crying and some people not crying. You can do whatever you feel is right for you. If you want to leave, we can leave.

**Do something.** Make cupcakes or cookies for the family. Select a fruit basket or a plant together and deliver it personally. Prepare a meal and take it to the family. Go have ice cream together and talk about your favorite stories of the person who died.

**Read together.** Some of our favorite books for kids in grief: *Goodbye Vivi* (Antoinette Schneider), *When Dinosaurs Die* (Marc & Kelsey Brown), *Lifetimes* (Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen), *It Must Hurt a Lot* (Doris Sanford), and *I Miss You* (Pat Thomas). Parents will find great help in Helen Fitzgerald's book, *The Grieving Child*. Both teenagers and their parents will find great information in *The Grieving Teen*, also written by Helen Fitzgerald as well as a journal for teens entitled *Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins* (Enid Traisman).

**Talk to a professional.** If you have questions about your child's experience in grief, seek advice from the school counselor, clergyperson, school psychologist, or a community mental health professional who understands grieving children.

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