



Understanding Grief

Brownsville ISD Counselor Grief Response Team



What is Grief?

- ▶ A reaction to any form of loss
- ▶ It encompasses a range of emotions and feelings from sadness to anger
- ▶ Includes a process of adapting to a significant loss



Four Tasks of Grieving: (William Worden)

- To accept the reality of the loss
- To work through the pain of grief
- To adjust to life without the deceased
- To maintain a connection to the deceased while moving forward with life



What is the Purpose of Grief Counseling?

- It is intended to help the person grieve in a healthy manner, to understand and cope with the emotions they experience and to ultimately find a way to move forward with the loss



The following symptoms are common in whichever order they appear in:

- ▶ Shock and disbelief, feeling numb, even denial that the loss occurred
- ▶ Sadness, despair, loneliness, feeling empty
- ▶ Guilt or regret
- ▶ Anger or feeling resentful
- ▶ Anxiety, helplessness, insecurity and fear
- ▶ Physical symptoms like fatigue, nausea, sickness, weight loss or gain, aches and pains, loss of sleep, etc.

It is normal to experience these symptoms, but if you are experiencing them very intensely, often or for a long period after a loss, speak to your parents and get professional help.



What helps after the death of a teen friend?

- ▶ Find a safe and trusted adult to share your feelings with
- ▶ Talk to your friends and let them know what you need (to talk about it, not to talk about it, to spend time with you or let you have some privacy)
- ▶ Find helpful vents/expression for your feelings
 - ❖ Crying
 - ❖ Exercise
 - ❖ Writing a letter with memories of the person to the family
 - ❖ Make a memory box or memory book
 - ❖ Volunteering - Get involved with a cause
 - ❖ Use creative expression such as: Art, Music, Dance, Song
 - ❖ Keep a journal. Read the letter to a trusted adult or counselor.



What helps after the death of a teen friend?

- ▶ Let yourself feel the pain of the loss (it is so much more tempting to avoid, repress, deny or push away the pain of the grief, than it is to confront it. Writing helps a lot.
- ▶ Let your pet comfort you or visit a friend who has a pet.
- ▶ Do something the person who died liked to do
- ▶ Listen to music
- ▶ Read books that help
- ▶ Never make decisions when feeling anger
- ▶ Schedule time outs from grief. Remember it is perfectly ok to laugh and go about a “normal day”
- ▶ Be kind to yourself. Stay away from “shoulding yourself” or others (I should be feeling.... / I should have... He should be feeling/ She should be)etc.
- ▶ Remember that this grief journey is your journey and not like anyone else's journey. Take it slowly and be patient with yourself.



Let go of the myths of grief:

- ▶ Myths include: get over it, be strong, don't talk about it, tears are weakness, grieve alone
- ▶ Grief is not normal or natural.
- ▶ Reality:
Allow grief to come as it comes. No two people grieve in the exact same way.



Funerals, Ceremonies and Memorializations:

Saying goodbye in a significant way is important for most people. Some teens feel cheated because there may not have been an opportunity to have a significant "farewell" before the person died.

- Write goodbye letters and read them at the grave, site of the ashes, and/or a special place.
- Spread the person's favorite fragrance on a favorite site and talk about the person
- Creatively organize memories into scrapbooks, photo albums, videos and journals
- Create art forms, paintings, collages, or drawings
- Write music, prose or poetry
- Ask the family if you can speak and share a memory at the service
- Remember the person on special days like their birthday and plan to do something that brings comfort to you and that honors the memory



Having a Support System is Important

- ▶ Stay connected with others during this time.
- ▶ Your support system may include your family, friends, teachers, counselors, your faith or mental health professional
- ▶ While it is common to share thoughts via texts and social media, it is important to talk to one another
- ▶ It is not ok to post information about the incident online that is not true or rumor or may be hurtful to families
- ▶ Remember to respect the family's privacy
- ▶ We must continue to follow social distancing and other county orders during the COVID pandemic



My Grief Plan

- ▶ Create a support network:
- ▶ Name three people that you can call when you need to talk: (think of 3 people at school and 3 people not at school)

- ▶ 2. List things that help you when you are feeling angry, sad, lonely,
- ▶ 3. List three healthy and positive things you can do to cope with your grief



A Final Exercise in Mindfulness Relaxation

- Sit straight up and comfortably in your chair and hold in your tummy
- Relax your shoulders and let your arms hang at your sides or rest on your lap. Feel your arms be limp
- Raise both shoulders up toward your ears, hold for 5 seconds and let them drop
- Repeat 3X
- Rotate your shoulders forward 3X
- On the last rotation forward – push your shoulders forward and hold for 5 seconds – feel the stretch across your chest and back
- Rotate your shoulders backwards 3X
- On the last rotation backward –pull your shoulders back and hold for 5 seconds – feel the stretch across the chest and back
- Relax your shoulders

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A Final Exercise in Mindfulness Relaxation

Box Breathing

- ▶ Slowly inhale - take a deep breath for 4 seconds
- ▶ Hold in for 4 seconds
- ▶ Slowly exhale for 4 seconds
- ▶ Rest for 4 seconds
- ▶ Repeat 4 times



Remember...

- Reach out to your family, teachers, school counselors or other trusted adults to help you in the grieving process as needed
- You are not alone



Resources

- ▶ Griefspeaks.org
 - ▶ Positive Psychology
 - ▶ Metanoia Wellness Center
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