

Recommendations for Youth

Kids aren't supposed to have to deal with death! If you've lost someone – a friend or classmate – there are some things you can do to help get yourself through this difficult time. One is to remember that it won't always feel like this. Especially the first time we grieve a death, it almost feels dangerous. It is overwhelming, foreign and frightening.

So here are a few suggestions:

Put a little extra energy into friendships. Call your friends more often for the next few days. If you had a good talk with someone today and don't know his or her phone number, get it before you leave school.

Eat decent food and try to get plenty of sleep. Although it is a temptation to use drugs or alcohol to "deaden the pain," it doesn't make the pain go away – it will be there for you later. Drugs and alcohol are never a substitute for learning how to cope.

Let your parents know what this is like for you. Tell them what you'd like from them. Let them know how they can support you. If you want to leave the radio on or the lights on in your room when you sleep, that's fine. Sometimes kids want to take a sleeping bag into their parents' room for a few nights just so they can sleep better.

Look for ways to support your friends, and for them to support you:

- Check in with each other.
- Spend more time together.
- Do some fun things, too. Take breaks from the grief.
- Let the school counselor know if you're concerned about one of your friends.

Go see your school counselor if you're having a tough time -- especially if you're having nightmares, fears or thoughts that you just can't get to go away.

If you think you might want to go to the funeral, find out all you can ahead of time. Find out if it will be in a church or a funeral home, whether there is a wake, and whether there will be a graveside service. If graveside, dress for the weather.

Take flowers or cards if you wish. Even though it may feel awkward, go ahead to talk to the family. Say that you feel bad about this, that you are sad, or that you wish there were something you could do. Any honest expression of how you are feeling is a fine thing to say. It is also fine to tell the family what one thing you admired or liked most about your deceased friend. Share your favorite memory with them.

If you are going to attend the service, remember to follow the school procedure for bringing permission slips back signed by parents, or whatever your school requires.