

# SUPPORTING A FRIEND WHO IS GRIEVING

Helpful for 6th -12th Grade

Grief impacts many different parts of a person. It can change how we act, our emotions, how we hang out, or even how our bodies feel. If a friend or someone in your class has experienced a death, it can be difficult to know how to support them. You might even be asking, "Do they want me to ask about their person?" It's important to remember; no two losses are the same. While there is no "one size, fits all" way to support a friend, this guide will provide helpful reminders, compassionate language, and ways to give your friend space to share their grief.

This could

## HELP



### Be HERE

*"Hey, no need to respond. Just wanted to let you know I'm thinking of you. I'm headed to the game tonight if you want to join. No pressure either way."*

Let your friend know you are here for them, without any expectations.



### EMPOWER

*"Do you want to talk, or would it be more helpful to just hang out right now?"*

Invite your friend to share what support they may need right now and know that this may change as their grief changes.



### LISTEN

*"I'm here any time to listen."  
"I know there is a special day coming up and I've been thinking about you. I'm here if you want to talk."*

Take time to listen and really hear your friend. Let them know that you are ready to listen when they are ready to share in the days, months, and years ahead.



### Ask PERMISSION before sharing anything about your friend's loss.

*"Thank you so much for trusting and sharing this with me. I won't share anything you said unless you say it would be helpful for me to give our friends a heads up."*

This could

## HURT



### HIDE or ignore them.

*"I don't know what to say to him, so I'm just not going to invite them."*

Show up for your friend, ask them to do normal activities. Understand they might not feel like joining you but continue to invite them.



### UNDERVALUE their experience.

*"I know exactly what it's like to have someone die, I completely get what you're going through."*

Please don't assume that you know what your friend's experience is like even if you had a similar loss.



### RUSH – Grief has no timeline.

*"I don't get it, you were fine last week, why are you all of a sudden upset about this again?"  
"Shouldn't you be over this by now? That happened a while ago."*

Some days your friend will feel fine, some days they may be upset and other days they will be joking and laughing. There isn't always a rhyme or reason to grief.



### TELL them how they should feel or what they should be doing.

*"You must be so angry at this." "You must be so sad and really miss your person." "You just need to keep their memory alive and think about what they would want for you. They wouldn't want you to be upset."*



# SUPPORTING A FRIEND WHO IS GRIEVING

## Helpful for Kindergarten - 5th Grade

Grief is something that impacts people in many ways. It can change how we act, how we feel, how we spend our time and play with our friends and family. Grief might also affect how our bodies feel. If a friend or someone in your class has experienced the death of someone, it can be difficult to know how to help them. You might even be thinking, "Do they want me to talk about their person who died?" It is important to remember that not everyone experiences death the same. We all need different things when we are grieving it is a good idea to ask the person what they need. Below are things you can say to someone to let them know that you care.

This could

## HELP

### H

#### Hear them

*"I am here to listen to you." "How are you today?"  
"I care about you, and I am here for you."*

Let your friend know that you are willing to listen and be there for them.

### E

#### Empower

*"Do you want to talk, or do you want to play?"  
"Do you want to tell me about your person who died?"*

Ask your friend if they feel OK telling you what helps and hurts them as they grieve.

### L

#### Learn about what your friend may need

*"What do you want to do today?"*

Allow your friend to tell you what they need to feel supported.

### P

#### Permission to grieve

*"It's okay to talk to me about your person who died and share how you feel."*

Let your friend know that you support them.

This could

## HURT

### H

#### Hide from your friend

*"I don't want to upset them, so I am going to leave my friend alone." "I bet they are feeling sad today, so I won't invite them over."*

Please do not avoid your friend who is grieving. Include your friend in activities and do not treat them differently.

### U

#### Try to Undo their pain

*"You need to be strong." "You shouldn't be feeling like that." "At least your person isn't hurting anymore."*

Grief can be really hard and can be very messy. Grief makes your friend have a lot of feelings.

### R

#### Rush them

*"Aren't you over this yet?" "Why are you still crying?"*

Grief can take a long time. Your friend may not feel better in a day or a week.

### T

#### Tell them how they should feel

*"I know just how you feel." "Don't feel sad."*

After someone dies, everyone's feelings of grief are as different as their fingerprint. The only person that understands your friend's grief is your friend.

