

SUPPORTING A CHILD OR TEEN WHO IS GRIEVING

Compassionate guidance for family, friends, and caregivers

Children and teens grieve in ways shaped by their age, development, and relationship with the person who died. They may move in and out of grief, repeat questions, or express feelings through behavior rather than words. Caring support offers honest information, dependable routines, patient listening, and new opportunities to understand the loss as they grow.

USE CLEAR, HONEST WORDS

Simple, truthful language helps young people understand what happened and reduces frightening misunderstandings.

- Use the words “died” and “death” gently
- Avoid phrases such as “went to sleep” or “went away”
- Answer only what they ask, in manageable pieces
- Say when you do not know an answer

NOTICE HOW GRIEF APPEARS

Grief may show itself through play, silence, physical complaints, school changes, anger, worry, or a need for closeness.

- Expect feelings to come and go
- Remain patient with repeated questions
- Do not mistake play or laughter for a lack of grief
- Ask gently about changes rather than assuming

OFFER CHOICE AND SECURITY

Loss can make the world feel unpredictable. Safe choices and familiar routines can help restore a sense of stability.

- Maintain dependable routines when possible
- Let them choose how to join rituals or memorials
- Reassure them that the death was not their fault
- Identify trusted adults they can talk with

KEEP SUPPORTING THEM

Children revisit grief as they mature and understand the loss in new ways. Support should grow and change with them.

- Keep memories and the person's name welcome
- Prepare them for holidays, milestones, and school events
- Coordinate support with caregivers and school staff
- Seek qualified help if safety or daily functioning is a concern

A GENTLE REMINDER

A grieving child or teen does not need perfect answers. They need truthful, caring adults who will listen, provide safety, and keep making room for their grief as they grow.

You do not need perfect words. Your steady, compassionate presence matters.

