

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING LOSS & BEREAVEMENT

ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

ALLOW TIME AND SPACE

Young people may take some time to digest the news, find out the facts and discover exactly how they feel. For some, this may be their first experience of someone they know dying. Reassure your child that you are there to talk when they are ready.

BE HONEST

Use clear language – like ‘death’ and ‘died’, rather than ‘loss’ – to reduce feelings of frustration or potential confusion. Share a consistent message that only contains the basic facts, without lots of detail. You should expect questions from your child and you should try to answer them to the best of your ability. However, it is ok to take your time to respond and say you have to look into it, or that it is something you will unlikely know.

NORMALISE FEELINGS

Every death and reaction is unique. We don't have to feel a specific way, so you should ask your child how they are feeling and normalise those feelings they share with you. They may worry that they are the only person who has ever felt this way. Assure them that feelings of anger, fatigue, fear, worry, stress, sadness, or guilt are all a normal reaction to grief. It is also ok for you to talk about and express your own feelings to your child, as they are normal reactions too.

FEELINGS OF GUILT

Some young people may feel a sense of guilt – that there was something they could have done. Let them know that this is a common feeling but help them understand they are not responsible, they cannot know exactly how someone is thinking or feeling, and that it may take time to understand and accept what has happened.

TAKE CARE

Try to encourage your child to stick to healthy routines by continuing to rest, eat and sleep. You may encourage them to keep active and to continue to talk to family, friends and others in the community. Teenagers can use less helpful coping strategies when under stress and helping them look after themselves reduces the likelihood of them using alcohol or risk taking.

MANAGE FEELINGS

Explore different strategies that may help your child manage their range of emotions. These may be new to them, or something that has worked before – for example: running, breathing and relaxation exercises, talking to others, or listening to music. This may also be to have some time to carry on with their normal routines, or continue with other things in their life.

THIS INFORMATION HAS BEEN SOURCED FROM SOME WEBSITES THAT MAY BE HELPFUL TO YOU OR YOUR CHILD:

[HTTP://WWW.HANDSONSCOTLAND.CO.UK/](http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk/)

[HTTPS://WWW.WINSTONSWISH.ORG/](https://www.winstonswish.org/)

[HTTPS://YOUNGMINDS.ORG.UK/](https://youngminds.org.uk/)

[HTTPS://WWW.MENTALHEALTH.ORG.UK/](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/)

[HTTP://WWW.SAD.SCOT.NHS.UK/](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk/)