



Basic Needs of Grieving Teens

Adapted from: *Helping Teens Cope with Death (2004)* by The Dougy Center for Grieving Children

Truth

Truth heals and promotes a healthy grieving process. Grievors appreciate truthful disclosure about all information relating to the person who died, the circumstances and potential changes that will affect them.

Assurances

Grieving teens want to feel certain that their parent or caregiver is healthy, balanced and in control. Parents should feel free to express emotions, but need to find adult support rather than depend upon the teen for support.

Boundaries

Young grievors need to know that adults care enough to set loving, specific limitations on their behavior. Reasonable and consistent boundaries provide safety and support teens during a period of disorienting change.

Choices

Teens are empowered when they are given choices and options. In the face of death, teens often feel powerless and out of control. Providing the teen with informed choices and accepting their decisions can help them regain a sense of balance, and show that you respect their decision-making abilities.

Food & Water

Grief work uses and depletes energy. Healthy, nutritious food provides fuel, so have it available in large quantities. Plan eating times that are comfortable and relaxed. Grievors also often experience dehydration. Water is a forgotten healer. Offer healthy liquids to teens who are grieving.

Listeners

Private grieving becomes public mourning when a teen finds an accepting listener in whom to confide. A safe listener can have a profound influence on the life of a young person who is grieving.

Models

Teens watch the adults in their lives to learn how (or how not) to grieve and mourn. Adults who abuse alcohol or other drugs, who refuse to display any emotions, or who run from their grief in other ways are poor models for a healthy grieving process.

Privacy

Much of grieving is a private process, including reflection, contemplation, communication, evaluation, emotion, determination and memorialization. Remember to respect the privacy of grieving teens.

Recreation

Grievors need time to have fun. Either with friends or alone, recreation can be a means of grieving or can provide a much needed break from the serious work of grieving.

Routines

Routines, such as regular bed times, meals and chores, provide a safe, predictable environment for teens. Routines allow teens consistency; they do not have to constantly worry about what will happen next.

Sleep

Grieving can cause fatigue. Grief work demands rest. Try to ensure that your teen gets enough sleep.

