

The Grieving Elementary School Student



Common Behaviors to Expect

- Regression to earlier behaviors
- Fighting, anger
- Difficulty in paying attention and concentrating
- Daydreaming
- Not completing homework or assignments
- Sleepiness
- Withdrawal

How to Help

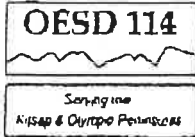
- Answer questions as clearly and accurately as possible
- Provide art, journal, music, and dance activities
- Make time for physical outlets, sports, games, walks, etc.
- Help the student identify and use support systems
- Work with the student around academic workload
- Encourage the student to take a break and have some alone time
- Allow for expression of feelings and emotions
- Maintain routines and structure but allow for flexibility
- Give the student choices whenever possible
- Let the student know you care and are thinking about her
- Assign the student a buddy who can work with her
- Create a "safe space" that a student can go to when needed

Common Mistakes: Words and Actions to Avoid

The following words and actions can be harmful to children and teens

- **DO NOT** suggest that the student has grieved long enough.
- **DO NOT** indicate that the student should get over it and move on.
- **DO NOT** expect the student to complete all assignments on a timely basis.
- **DO NOT** act as if nothing has happened.
- **DO NOT** say things like:
 - "It could be worse, you still have one brother."
 - "I know how you feel."
 - "You'll be stronger because of this."

Taken from "Helping the Grieving Student: A Guide for Teachers" The Dougy Center for Grieving Children



The Grieving Middle School Student



Common Behaviors to Expect

- Argumentative
- Withdrawal, sullenness
- Anger, fighting
- Sleepiness
- Lack of concentration and attentiveness
- Risk-taking behaviors [drugs, sexual acting out, stealing]
- Unpredictable ups and downs or moodiness
- Erratic, inconsistent reactions

How to Help

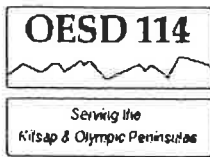
- Expect and accept mood swings
- Provide a supportive environment where the student can share, when needed
- Anticipate increased physical concerns including illness and body aches and pains
- Allow the student to choose with whom and how she gets support
- Encourage participation in a support group
- Allow flexibility in completing school work

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The Grieving High School Student



Common Behaviors to Expect

- Withdrawal from parents and other adults
- Angry outbursts
- Increased risk-taking behaviors [substances, reckless driving, sexual behaviors]
- Pushing the limits of rules
- Lack of concentration; inability to focus
- Hanging out with a small group of friends
- Sad face, evidence of crying
- Sleepiness, exhaustion

How to Help

- Allow for regression and dependency
- Encourage expression of feeling such as sorrow, anger, guilt, regret
- Understand and allow for variation in maturity level
- Answer questions honestly and provide factual information
- Model appropriate responses, showing the students your own grief
- Avoid power struggles and allow choices
- Help students understand and resolve feelings of helplessness
- Assist students with plans for completion of assignments
- Allow for some flexibility in assignments, e.g. be willing to adapt assignments to topics relevant to the student's current experience

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