

**WHAT TEENS CAN DO
TO
HELP A GRIEVING CLASSMATE**

1. **Empathize**. Take time to imagine what you would feel like standing in the grieving person's shoes.
2. **Practice** the "Golden Rule." Leave words unsaid that might enlarge an emotional wound, rather than contribute to healing and comfort. It's O.K. to say, "I don't know what to say," or "I don't have words that feel adequate."
3. **Learn about healthy grief:** (Books, articles, internet.)
 - A. It's a natural response to separation and loss.
 - B. It's a necessary healing process.
 - C. Each person grieves in his or her own unique way.
(There's no one 'right' way to grieve.)
 - D. Grief takes as long as it takes – always longer than we want it to take.
 - E. "Normal" grief includes anger, guilt, and many other feelings that can be overwhelming and even frightening.
4. **Remember** that another person's reaction to a loss may be different from yours. In fact, it's important **not** to assume that another person feels (or doesn't feel) the same as you do.
5. **Listen**, if you have time and the emotional energy. Let your grieving friend teach you what this loss is like for him or her. You don't have to fix anything or problem solve; neither of which works. Some questions don't have answers; we just learn to live with them. Listening shows that you really care. Invite the sharing of memories. Allow tears.
6. **Hang out**. Just not being alone can be helpful for some; others need time alone to process. Respect your friend's wishes. Low key "togetherness" such as listening to music can be comforting.
7. **Encourage a healthy lifestyle:** good nutrition, eight hours of sleep, exercise and plenty of water. Grief is depleting and can compromise a person's immune system, meaning susceptibility to colds, flu, etc.
8. **Discourage risk-taking behaviors**. Thrill seeking, substance abuse, promiscuity, reckless driving, etc., offer temporary distraction from emotional pain and can ultimately enlarge the loss or create more complicated problems.
9. **Stay in touch** by phone or dropping by to show you care.
10. **Offer to assist with rituals or memorials** that express regard for the person who died. Putting flowers by a photograph, lighting a candle, ringing a bell, create a scrapbook of special memories.