

5 Tips to help a grieving student

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DEATH ARE UNCOMFORTABLE

You might be thinking:

"I don't want to make things worse or upset my student by mentioning it"

"It's up to my student to ask for help whenever they're ready"

If you feel uncomfortable as an adult, imagine how difficult it might be for your student.

SAYING NOTHING LEAVES CHILDREN ALONE

Children might think that:

- You're insensitive and you don't realize that they are struggling
- You don't care about something so important in their life
- You believe you are incapable of providing them support
- You feel that they won't be able to adjust and cope, even with your support

REACH OUT PROACTIVELY

Offer a private setting

Acknowledge their loss and offer to speak to them

Offer practical advice

Offer other outlets or professionals

Help them think of other options in their family and community

INITIATE THE CONVERSATION

Express concern: "I've heard about the death of your dad. I'm here to support you."

Be genuine: "I see the grief you feel over someone so important in your life having died. I'm sad that you have experienced this loss."

Limit personal sharing: it's all about them. This is not a time for you to share your personal experience of grief.

Invite a conversation: use simple, direct and open-ended questions, such as "How are you and your family doing?"

Listen and observe: this is mostly a time for you to listen to your student and share observations in a neutral way.

Offer reassurance: "With time, you will be able to cope with your distress. We care about you and we are here to support you along the way."

MAINTAIN CONTACT

Students may not be ready to accept your invitation to talk or your offers of assistance in the first place.

They may be so overwhelmed by their emotions that they want to appear in control

Students may not yet know how to express their emotions.

Their questions and concerns might evolve over time.

Remain available and present over time.