

SUPPORTING A GRIEVING YOUNG PERSON

A guide for teachers, parents, counsellors, chaplains, psychologists, youth workers, nurses, and doctors

Developed by young people aged 14-24 years

PLEASE DO...



LISTEN

- Acknowledge my thoughts and feelings
- Listen to understand, not to respond or fix it

NORMALISE AND VALIDATE

- Make me feel heard, validated, and understood

RESPECT AUTONOMY

- Provide the option to talk
- Ask “do you wanna talk about it?”
- Say “I’m not going to push you to talk but if you want to, I’m here”

PROVIDE RESOURCES

- If you don’t have the capacity to help someone who’s grieving, connect them to a person or a programme that can help them

CHECK-IN OVER TIME

- It doesn’t have to be one conversation
- Reach out to let me know you’re there



PLEASE DON'T...



USE OUTDATED IDEAS LIKE ‘STAGES OF GRIEF’ OR ‘GETTING OVER IT’

- You go through different stages over and over again, and in different orders
- I need help to move forward, not to forget what happened

USE CLICHES AND PLATITUDES

- Don’t tell me it will get better in time
- I’m not in that time, and you’re not helping me

TREAT ALL YOUNG PEOPLE THE SAME

- Don’t pigeon-hole all young people who are grieving, into a box
- Everyone can be very different

PROVIDE UNSOLICITED ADVICE

- I need support, not solutions or advice about what I ‘should’ do

MAKE IT ABOUT YOU

- Don’t pretend you understand
- Don’t divert the conversation back to your experience

(Designed by Tyesha Shelton, 2024)



SUPPORTING A GRIEVING YOUNG PERSON

A guide for teachers, parents, counsellors, chaplains, psychologists, youth workers, nurses, and doctors

What young people (aged 14-24) want you to know about the evidence:

Grief in young people is common

By the age of 10, up to 60% of children report being bereaved by the death of a person who was close to them ⁽¹⁾

By the end of high school, 90% of adolescents have experienced the death of a family member or friend ⁽²⁾



Grief is a response to a range of losses

Young people report grieving non-death losses such as parents' divorce and relationship break-ups ⁽³⁾

Grief is unique to each person, and doesn't have a set pattern or timeline

Grief is a dynamic process, based on the characteristics of the grieving person and the circumstances of loss, involving ongoing adjustment to loss over time ⁽⁴⁾



Grief is normal but is also linked to mental health problems

Grieving young people are at an increased risk of anxiety, depression, substance use, self-harm and suicide attempts, poorer physical health, and reductions in educational attainment ⁽⁵⁻⁷⁾

Grieving young people don't get the support they need

Grief is typically overlooked when young people seek mental health support ⁽⁸⁾

Young people experience barriers to accessing support such as long waitlists and costs, and want adults around them to be better equipped to help them ⁽³⁾



Sources: (1) Paul & Vaswani (2020) Palliative Care and Social Practice, 14. (2) Ens & Bond (2005) Death Studies, 29, 171-178. (3) Breen et al (2023) Journal of Affective Disorders, 335, 289-297. (4) Guldin & Leget (2023) Death Studies, 48, 738-752. (5) Weinstock et al (2021) Frontiers of Psychiatry, 12. (6) Pham et al (2018) American Journal of Psychiatry, 175, 887-896. (7) Hiyoshi et al (2022) The Lancet Public Health, 7, e683-e693. (8) Kentor & Kaplow (2020) Lancet Child and Adolescent Health, 4, 889-898.

(Designed by Tyesha Shelton, 2024)

