

Tips for Supporting the Grieving Teen

from The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

Provide opportunities for recreation.

Whether it was a parent, caregiver, or sibling who died, teens can feel compelled to step in and take on extra responsibilities. Babysitting younger siblings, helping with housework, or even getting an after school job to contribute to the family's finances are some of the ways teens try to help out. While it might be necessary for them to take on a helper role, be sure to also make time for them to play and still be a kid, in whatever ways fit for them. Reassure teens that you are still there to take care of them and that they don't have to shoulder so much responsibility for the family's well-being.

Get extra help if needed.

While most teens will ultimately return to their prior level of functioning following a death, some are potentially at risk for developing challenges such as depression, anxiety, difficulties at school, suicidal thoughts, or high risk behaviors. While friends, family, or a support group may be enough for many teens, others find additional assistance from a therapist or school counselor to be helpful. If you notice ongoing behaviors that are interfering with a teen's daily life, seek the advice of a qualified mental health professional. Don't be afraid to ask about their experience and training in grief and loss, working with teens, and their treatment philosophy and methods.

Find sources of support for yourself.

If you are parenting or supporting a grieving teen, one of the best ways to help is to ensure that you are taking care of yourself. Research shows us that how well a teen does after a death is linked to how well the adults in their lives are doing. You don't have to hide your grief, but be sure to establish people and activities in your life that provide comfort and inspiration. By accessing support, you model for your teens ways to take care of themselves, and provide reassurance that you will have the energy and presence to be there for them.

These are just a few tips for how to support grieving teens. Grief is unique to each person and every family, so adapt these suggestions as needed.



For some teens, methods of communication that aren't face to face can be easier to navigate.

Our Mission

The Dougy Center provides support in a safe place where children, teens, young adults, and their families grieving a death can share their experiences.

The Dougy Center Bookstore/Resources

The Dougy Center has been helping children, teens, young adults and their parents cope with death since 1982. Our practical, easy-to-use materials are based on what we have learned from more than 30,000 Dougy Center participants over the past three decades. To order online, visit www.dougy.org or www.tdcbookstore.org or call 503.775.5683.



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