



Kaleidoscope

Ways to support the grieving student

Provide a Grief Pass:

Grieving students often feel like they are being watched by teachers and peers to see how they are adjusting in their grief. They fear being overwhelmed by their grief and becoming emotional in front of their peers.

A way to help is to provide a discreet way for the student to break away from the classroom to deal with their grief. For example, allowing the student to place an object on the corner of their desk to alert you about needing some space, without drawing attention to the event or having to explain themselves.

If a student is unable to access a place outside the classroom, another option would be to access a corner of the room as a safe place when needing that break.

Designate a Support Person:

Additional support may be needed during the day if the student is feeling overwhelmed with their grief, or worried about their surviving family members.

A person whom the student feels comfortable with might be designated as a support system during school, ie: school nurse, teacher's aide, a guidance counselor.

Phone Calls:

Grieving students may be preoccupied with the fear that something terrible will happen to their surviving family. Allowing the student to make short phone calls to their family members can give the student the reassurance they need that their family members are safe, which can help them continue with their day.

Maintain Consistency/ But be Flexible:

It is important for the student's sense of normalcy and stability to be maintained. Returning to the classroom that continues to function on the same expectations and schedules as before is important.

Keep in mind that the grieving student might have a shorter attention span and more difficulty with concentration. Reminders about tests or homework may be helpful.

The teacher's expectations for appropriate behavior should not change, but providing extended deadlines for paper and projects, or allowing extended time for testing can make a big difference.

Sensitivity to important Dates:

Special days, dates, and events may be especially painful for the student. Being attentive to these dates will at least help in understanding what is going on under the surface. Example of special days: birthday of the deceased, date of death, holidays, Mother or Father's Day.
