



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT WHEN A TEEN IS GRIEVING

The following information was provided by "Teens Age Grief, Inc.", an organization dedicated to supporting bereaved teens. Loss for teenagers can be particularly difficult. In a time when the single most important thing in life is to fit in, suddenly something in their life is radically different. Changing body chemistry can wreak havoc on their moods and may affect their ability to understand and process their loss. These suggestions are from people who have done extensive work with grieving teens.

### **NORMALIZE THEIR EXPERIENCE**

Yes, of course you will feel anger, guilt, fear. Kids fear that they will get out of control, that they are going "crazy". They have probably never experienced this before and don't have the cognitive abilities to make sense of it all. Let them know it is normal. Don't try to talk them out of their feelings. Listen to them. Empathize... "Yes, I hear you are afraid, why of course you're angry". Allow a full range of emotions.

### **LET THEM KNOW YOU ARE AVAILABLE**

to listen. They may need to tell their story over and over again. This is their attempt to make sense of it all, a very difficult task.

### **WHAT DOES ONE NEED TO SAY GOODBYE?**

Do they need a ritual of some kind? To light a candle before an event they shared together? To partake in the funeral? To write goodbye letters to their loved one? Closure is so important. Attending the funeral is so important. Finding a way to say goodbye. With a sudden or unexpected loss, saying goodbye is not so easy because of all the other issues of guilt and "if only" and "why" and "how". These feelings may linger on after the goodbyes.

### **ONE DOESN'T HAVE TO TAKE THE PAIN AWAY**

One only has to witness it, to sit with it, to not be afraid of it, to be a vessel that can receive the pain, the doubts, the fears and uncertainties. What a gift you can bring to this moment in their life that is already filled with uncertainty and confusion.

### **LEARN HOW THEY ARE PROCESSING THIS LOSS**

Learn what it means to them. Are there irrational

beliefs? Important to know especially if they persist long after the death.

### **BE CERTAIN THEIR QUESTIONS ARE ANSWERED**

If we hide the truth that they are seeking, they will make up their own reality, and chances are it may be distorted. Not everyone needs the same information. It is unique to each person's experience and developmental level. Find out what they need to know, want to know, to go on with the healing process.





**SIGNATURE** healthcare  
at home

care where you are

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT WHEN A TEEN IS GRIEVING (CONTINUED)

The following resources are available for children in the Portland Metro Area and Salem.

### The Dougy Center

P 866.775.5683 (Toll Free)

P 503.775.5685

[www.dougy.org](http://www.dougy.org)

### Me Too & Company

(Sponsored by the Oregon Hospice Association and others)

P 503.228.2104

<https://oregonhospice.org/metoo/>

### Hope Bereavement Services

(Sponsored by SW Washington Medical Center)

P 360.696.5120

<https://www.peacehealth.org/southwest/bereavement-services>

### Camp Erin

(Sponsored by Providence Healthcare)

P 503-215-5879

<https://oregon.providence.org/our-services/c/camp-erin/>

### GRIEF IS UNIQUE TO EACH PERSON

Be aware of the different responses to the loss. It is based on previous loss experiences and how one attempts to make sense of the loss... what feelings are triggered... what coping mechanisms they have developed at this time in their lives. No two people in a family grieve alike.

### THEY WILL HEAL

Be aware of these young people's enormous capacity to heal. They will show us the way if and only if we are the inviters to the process, the educators, the comforters, and witnesses to their grief. We model openness, safety, respite and honesty. No, we don't have the answers but we are willing to walk by their side in looking for them. Not an easy task because we too, as adults, can feel

their pain as well as our own.

### HELP YOURSELF FIRST

When adults ask us how we can help the children, we respond: First get help for yourself. As adult caregivers, in whatever capacity: parent, teacher, minister, coach, friend, we need to explore our own pain as well, and how it affects the messages we are giving to our young people. We serve as role models on how to grieve and how to make sense of something that is so confusing for the child. They look to us for guidance at this crucial junction in their lives. It is all right to say "we don't have an answer".

### OUT OF PAIN COMES GROWTH

Our experience working with kids is that out of pain and suffering, wonderful growth in personhood can result. Empathy with one another is often a human factor that may otherwise take a lifetime to be fully realized. I invite you to be part of this process of growth as the kids work through the pain. Kids are awesome! So are you. You have chosen to walk with them on this very difficult journey. Time alone does not heal a broken heart. It only teaches one to deal with it. It helps to have a fellow sojourner.

### Portland/Salem and Surrounding Areas:

P 800.936.4756 (Toll Free)

### Eugene:

P 866.306.4279 (Toll Free)

[info@4signatureservice.com](mailto:info@4signatureservice.com)

Patient services are provided without regard to race, color, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability (mental or physical), communicable disease, place of national origin or military status. For more information, please contact Signature at 800.936.4756