



## Assisting Your Adolescent with Grief

When tragedy strikes, it can be very difficult to handle for adults and adolescents. Most adolescents have some concept of death. Like adults, adolescents struggle to understand why an event happened.

They also want to know how it will affect their daily lives.

Every adolescent grieves in different ways. Here are some ways to assist your child in dealing with grief:

- Ask them what they know, feel, or have heard.
- Be very open and honest about the tragic situation.
- Let the adolescent know how you are feeling.
- It is appropriate to let the adolescent know how hard the situation is for you.
- It is ok to cry with the adolescent. Encourage them (boys and girls) to cry. Tears naturally cleanse and heal the hurt.
- Be alert to the kinds of emotions they express and questions they ask. Take clues from them.
- The adolescent will let you know how much comfort they need and how much information they can handle.
- The adolescent may ask the same questions again and again. This does not mean that your answer has not been helpful. It clarifies their confusion and fear.
- Adolescents will grieve over and over again. Whenever the person who died would have been present for special occasions, the grief will resurface.
- Emphasize that people who are loved and cared about are kept in memories. Encourage ideas as how this can be done.
- Adolescents who have experienced a recent loss may be more affected when learning of another death; even if they do not know the deceased it may bring up stronger feelings.

Grief does affect children, teens, and adolescents that are not immediately involved. Particularly vulnerable children, teens, and adolescent who may be at risk (children undergoing a divorce, recent death in the family, or a terminally ill family member).

Appropriate Reactions to Trauma:

Ages: 10-12 for pre-adolescent girls and 12-14 years pre-adolescent boys

1. May become more childlike in attitude.
2. May be very angry at unfairness of the tragedy.
3. May see symbolic meaning in the events prior to the tragedy.
4. Often suppress thoughts and feelings.
5. May be judgmental about their own behaviors.
6. May have a sense of foreshortened future.
7. May have a sense of meaninglessness of existence.
8. Psychosomatic illnesses may surface amongst themselves.

Ages: 14-16 years

1. Adolescents most resemble adult-post-traumatic stress reactions.
2. May feel anger, shame, and betrayal.
3. May opt to move into adult world as soon as possible.
4. Judgmental about their own behaviors and the behaviour of others.

5. May become suspicious and guarded in their reaction to others.
6. Eating and sleeping habits may be interrupted.
7. May have psychosomatic illnesses.

Reactions to Tragedy

<b>Physical</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>	<b>Emotional</b>
Fatigue	Difficulty concentrating	Helplessness or meaninglessness
Changes in sleeping patterns	Difficulty making decisions	Numbness or hypersensitivity
Changes in eating patterns	Flashbacks or preoccupation with the event	Fear, panic, feeling unsafe
Changes in other activities	Memory disturbances	Moodiness, crying, or depression
Digestion problems or stomachaches	A sense that things are not real	Anger or guilt
Headaches or dizziness	Getting “stuck” thinking about the event constantly	Isolation from other people
Physical tension, shakiness, or weakness	Forgetfulness: concentration focused on the event	Feeling that your thoughts or emotions are out of control
		Neediness, not wanting to be alone

**Counseling Referrals**

**Oswego Wellness**

5 East Washington Street  
 Oswego, IL 60540  
 630.519.1010

**Fox Bend Counseling**

123 W. Washington Street # 321  
 Oswego, IL 60543  
 30.383.2077

**Innovative Behavioral Health**

58 Chicago Road 2nd Floor  
 Oswego, IL 60543  
 630.913.7045

**Kendall County Health/Human Services**

811 W. John Street  
 Yorkville, IL 60560  
 630.553.9100

**Centennial Counseling Center**

106 Countryside Parkway  
 Yorkville, IL 60560  
 630.553.9686

**Edgewood Clinical Services**

14722 S. Naperville Road  
 Plainfield, IL 60544  
 630.428.7890