



Student FAQ about Grief

What are signs and symptoms of grief in children and teens?

Even children who are able to express their feelings of grief through words, still at times will show signs of grief through verbal, emotional, and physical behaviors at times. Each child is unique so each child will express grief in his or her own way and own time. There is a wide range of normal behavior. These are some of the normal and worrisome behaviors that may be signs of grief in children or teenagers.

Normal Verbal Behaviors:

- Talking about the deceased or loss a lot
- Not talking about the deceased or loss at all. (Some children initially act like everything is fine)
- Asking numerous questions
- Not asking any questions
- Wanting to hear the story of the loss over and over
- Not wanting to hear anything about the loss
- Wishing to be with the deceased (be careful not to jump to the conclusion that a child or teen is necessarily suicidal, but don't ignore the possibility either)
- Engaging attention by talking a lot
- Saying silly things, being the class clown
- Mentioning nighttime dreams about the person who died
- Talking about having "seen" or "felt" the person who died
- Voicing fears of almost everything and anything
- Voicing worries about safety, other people getting sick or dying

Normal Emotional Behaviors

- excessive crying

- crying at unexpected times
- having strong feelings about seemingly small things
- over-reacting to a situation
- inability to concentrate or focus
- noncompliance with adults
- needing to be near an adult all the time
- being angry at everyone and everything
- seeing someone and believing it is the person who died
- forgetfulness
- lowered self esteem
- irritability
- clowning

Normal Physical behaviors:

- eating a lot
- not eating much
- sleeping a lot
- not sleeping
- urine and bowel accidents
- pains in the stomach and other areas unexplained by physician
- non-serious, recurrent illnesses such as colds, sore throats, and headaches.
- older children regressing: clinging, wanting to do babyish things such as suck a bottle, play with dolls
- aggressive behavior such as hitting, pinching
- needing to touch people frequently
- weariness and fatigue, even with enough sleep
- wanting to rip and destroy things

What are behaviors I should get help with?

Worrisome behaviors:

- dangerous risk taking
- self destructive behaviors
- threatening to hurt self or others
- violent play
- total withdrawal from people and environment
- a dramatic change in personality or functioning over a long period of time
- any of the "normal" behaviors happening over a very long time or to an extreme.

From the website Griefspeaks - [Signs of grief in children and teens](#)

Where can I get help?

Talk to a parent, school counselor, teacher, or other trusted adult and tell them how you're feeling. They can help you connect with someone who can help. This might be your local doctor or a mental health professional.

Student FAQ about Suicide

Is it possible to predict suicide?

At the current time there is no definitive measure to predict suicide or suicidal behavior. Researchers have identified factors that are associated with higher risk for suicide. These include mental illness, previous suicide attempts, family stress and dysfunction, family history of suicide, physical or sexual abuse, family violence, traumatic death of a loved one, and impulsive or aggressive tendencies. Alcohol and substance abuse can contribute to suicidal behavior. Substance abuse can be common among teens prone to be impulsive, and among those who engage in many types of high risk behaviors that result in self-harm. In addition to being

depressed, those who are dependent on substances are also likely to have social problems. Suicide is a relatively rare event and it is therefore difficult to predict which persons with these risk factors will ultimately commit suicide.

What are the most common warning signs that somebody is seriously considering suicide?

The most common signs that somebody may be at risk for suicide are:

- A previous suicide attempt
- Talking about being dead or wishing they were dead, how others would be happier if he/she were dead or how much better off others will be when he/she is gone.
- Repeatedly engaging in very risky or dangerous thrill-seeking behavior.
- Extreme mood swings; very depressed episodes followed by happy episodes with no clear reason for the change.
- Refusal to accept praise or compliments.
- Regular expressions of worthlessness, helplessness, sadness and/or loneliness.
- Drastic changes in habits, friends, or appearance, i.e.; new friends, skipping school, dropping out of favorite activities, and no longer caring about appearance or cleanliness.
- Changes in weight, sleeping habits, and physical activity.
- Withdrawing from friends, family, or activities that once gave the person pleasure or a sense of identity.
- A sudden, unexpected and tragic event or the anniversary of such an event accompanied by a uncharacteristic withdrawal and/or depression.
- "Getting the house in order" – e.g., giving away cherished belongings to close friends.

What can be done about suicides that do not have any of the “obvious” warning signs?

The best prevention is for a teenager to have open communication with a caring adult who can listen without judgment to the concerns of the teen. Despite this, sometimes teens are unable to let someone know how much distress they feel. Some of the preventive actions that parents can take are to limit their teenager's access to guns, knives, alcohol, prescription pills and illegal drugs. Other steps parents can take is to know who their child's friends are and to networking with the other parents on a regular basis. Do not be afraid to keep track of your child's whereabouts and communications. They may complain about their privacy, but it is the parents' job to keep their child safe.

Does suicide does tend to run in families?

It has not been definitively proven that there is a direct genetic component involved in suicidal thinking and attempts. What is known is that mental illness runs in families, and mental illness increases the likelihood of suicide attempts. If an adolescent shows signs of suicidal thinking and the family has a history of mental illness, especially clinical depression, there is increased reason for concern.

Do all suicidal people talk about killing themselves before they try to do it?

No. While it is very common for suicidal people to tell someone what they are

planning, it is possible for somebody to be thinking about suicide without telling a soul. In the absence of other warning signs, a suicide threat is not even considered the most credible indicator of suicide risk, but any talk of suicide should be brought to the attention of people who can intervene: parents, teachers, school counselors, social workers, even the police.

Are all suicide threats real or is it usually just a cry for attention?

While many teens threaten suicide to get attention, it is impossible to make that definitive determination. A suicide threat must be taken seriously. If you hear someone is considering suicide, be it directly or through the rumor mill, make sure you alert a trusted adult who is able to better assess the situation: a parent, teacher, school counselor, pediatrician or member of the clergy is a good choice.

How do I know when to take a friend's suicide threat seriously?

The best rule to follow is if a friend says that they are going to kill themselves you should take it seriously. Turn to a trusted adult who is in a position to get help for your friend if the threat is real. Obviously there are situations where somebody may say, "I wish I was dead!" and not mean it at all but it is better to be safe than sorry. No harm ever came from caring too much!

What should I say to my suicidal friend?

Tell the friend that you care about them and that he or she is an important part of your life. Ask the friend to reach out for professional help. Don't leave the friend alone; get other friends involved if you must, and alert a parent, trusted adult or school official who is able to intervene and get the friend some professional help.

What should I do to stop them?

Do not take it on yourself to talk your friend out of it. Just be there to help your

friend through this troubling time. Stay until a parent, trusted adult or school official administrator is able to take control of the situation. If the threat is an obvious emergency or if your friend is in imminent danger call 911 right away.

How do we encourage students to report signs of a problem without them feeling that they are snitching?

Teens talk about "the deadly secret" of being put in the position of having to keep a friend's confidence without "snitching". Explain that going to an adult when they have concerns for a friend's safety is not snitching, it's the mature and responsible thing to do. Choosing not to "snitch" could result in your child living with the thought that they should have told someone, but waited until it was too late! Tell your child that if they have concerns about a friend, you are willing to discuss their concerns before jumping into take action.

My friend is saying he/she wants to commit suicide after killing all the people who make him/her miserable, what should I do?

Do not take it on yourself to decide if your friend's threats are credible. This is a burden you need not bear. Let adults and trained professionals assess the situation and determine how valid the threat is and what should be done next. If you fear your might retaliate, make sure that you make this clear when reaching out for help. This is factor that should be considered by the school administrators and police.

