

ADDRESSING GRIEF IN SCHOOLS

– CHEAT SHEET –

Grief is the normal and natural emotional reaction to loss or change of any kind. It's the response to the loss of something or someone we love and care about. Grief is both a universal and personal experience. Everyone has their own unique grief journey. Here's what you can do to support your students on theirs.

1. Identify

Be on the lookout for the signs of grief including: lethargy, **sadness**, anger, guilt, anxiety, **despondency**, **difficulty concentrating**, outbursts, withdrawal from normal activities, etc.

2. Ask

Check in with students in a private setting to inquire about what might be going on and how you can help. Whatever students bring up, make sure you **allow space for them to feel whatever they are feeling** in the moment.

3. Comfort

Validate a student's feelings about their loss and **normalize** what they are going through. **Welcome and respect their feelings**. Help students feel safe, seen, and secure. **Ask what they need**. Listen and respect any boundaries about what they do or do not want to discuss.

4. Connect

Connect with your school counselor to share what you are observing in the student and get feedback from them about how you might be able to help.

What to Avoid

Don't ignore grief. **Don't offer silver linings or platitudes**. Don't minimize grief or try to rush students through it. Don't press for normality. Don't offer unsolicited advice. Don't justify what happened to their loved one with religion or anything else.

