

How to support the bereaved?

Even without specialized training in grief support, it is often possible to provide meaningful support to young people or colleagues who are experiencing a loss. The goal is to remain a trusted person whom they know they can turn to when support is needed. Whether a tragic event has affected the entire school community or a student is returning to school after the death of a loved one, this brief guide outlines simple ways to support the bereaved..

Remember that school personnel are not expected to have all the answers. If a situation, a person's comments, or certain behaviours raise concerns or seem beyond one's role or expertise, support should be sought from individuals who are better equipped to respond.

Have big ears to listen, big eyes to notice, and a very small mouth!

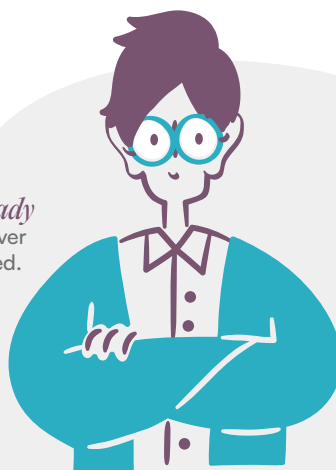
Often, the most helpful thing to do is simply listen, remain attentive to changes, and avoid speaking when it is not necessary.

Here are a few phrases that may be helpful to a grieving person:

- What do you need?
- What can I do to help?

Please know that Ms. Geneviève and I are available if you have any questions or if you would like to talk.

Big ears to be ready
to listen to whatever
needs to be shared.



Big eyes to look
at the person with care
and confidence.

A small mouth to
speak only when it is
important.



Respect their pace and let them be the expert on their own grief.

Grief is experienced differently from one person to another.

The only person who is truly an expert on a grief experience is the person living through it.

Avoid making decisions for them or pressuring them to do anything they are not ready to do.

When someone is going through a difficult experience, it can be tempting to avoid mentioning it for fear of upsetting them or bringing them back to painful emotions.

However, when it is known that someone is grieving, it can be very beneficial to let them know that support is available. (For example "I know about what you're going through, and I want you to know that if you'd like to talk about it, I'm here for you.")

In this way, support is offered while respecting the person's pace. When they feel ready, they can decide whether they would like to talk and whom they would like to confide in.

