

COUNSELING & CAREER CENTER NEWS

LSHS Guidance Team 425-335-1571 For more info: <http://viking.lkstevens.wednet.edu/page/1987>



Grief and Loss

It is highly likely that you will encounter a grieving student almost every day, even if the signs of grief are not visible or obvious. The National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement reports that 40% of students will experience the death of a peer and 20% will have witnessed a death. Oftentimes the grief process is interrupted by the practicality of handling the loss. Examples could include: funerals, babysitting, missed homework, travel, extreme avoidance of thoughts/feelings, and taking care of a parent's big feelings. When the responsibilities of grief are neglected issues will likely surface later.

Holidays can magnify the loss for students or any staff member, whether they have experienced the loss of a parent, sibling, family member, pet, friend, or an acquaintance. Holiday celebrations change when loss occurs. Holidays lead to heightened expectations and can feel like a test of how happy or successful a person or family is.

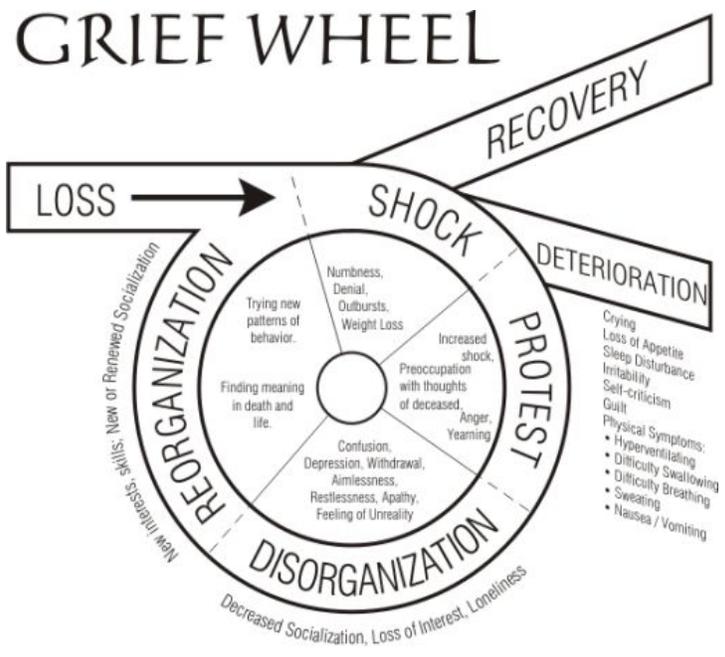
The "Grief Wheel" (below) shows examples of common experiences (but all are not "correct" or required). It is important to note that studies show there is no specific sequence of emotional phases to grieving. Most individuals oscillate between actively coping with loss through grief work and taking "time off" from grief.

"Unofficial Loss"

For students/people who have lost a loved one, grief is easier to recognize. However, students may also experience other types of loss, for example the loss of a friend group, a parent going to treatment, a dream/ambition, a sports injury, housing stability, or family structure due to divorce. These more "unofficial" examples of loss can be more subtle in nature, therefore less easily understood, but students may still struggle with change similarly as they might to grief.

Anticipatory Grief

Anticipating the death of a sick parent, waiting for an upcoming transition that impacts daily functioning, dreading an impending divorce... grief can begin long before a death or change. Complicated emotions associated with grief are often coupled with the exhaustion that comes with being a caregiver. Fatigue sets in when we grieve little losses along the way. Anticipatory grief can bring about feelings of overwhelming anxiety and dread. This journey is exceptionally painful and students can be supported by listening and validating their feelings. This can be done in addition to emphasizing their stated goals, and parroting back any of their own statements of hope.



The grieving process is influenced by many issues.

The impact of a death on a teen relates to a combination of factors including:

Social support systems available for the teen (family, friends and/or community)	Circumstances of the death - how, where and when the person died	Whether or not the young person unexpectedly found the body	The nature of the relationship with the person - harmonious, abusive, conflictual, unfinished	The teen's level of involvement in the dying process	The emotional and developmental age of the teen	The teen's previous experiences with death
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(from <https://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/how-to-help-a-grieving-teen/>)

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Impact on Students

Everyone grieves differently; you may see:

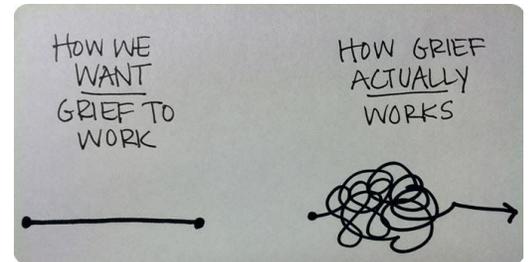
- Difficulty mastering new material
- May become more irritable, withdrawn, depressed, or anxious
- Partake in risky activities and behaviors
- Dramatic shift in performance (underfunctioning, apathy, overfunctioning, perfectionism)
- Perseveration on loss (of opportunity, tangible things, people)
- Overgeneralization, black or white thinking
- May shutdown or act out when a grief related topic is presented
- Questioning religious or spiritual beliefs / challenging others' belief systems

**If you have specific concerns about a student, contact their school counselor.



Acceptance, Hope, and Personal Growth

Students may wonder, "will I ever get over this?" Most of us are well aware from personal experience that a loss is not something that a person can just "get over." Grief is often compared to a journey. In time, the future begins to look hopeful, even though pain is still present after a loss. There are things students can do to cross over the rough and rocky places along the way. The most important part of supporting a bereaved person is to listen to their story, acknowledge their feelings, and guide them to work towards a new, different, and meaningful life without the deceased. For other types of grief this means acknowledging the death of a dream like playing professional sports after an injury. Working through grief may give new strengths and insight, such as feeling more empathy for others and a greater understanding of what's important.



Do's

Do... Listen, empathize, validate, ask for a story of a good time with the person who has been lost, and offer resources (school counselor, crisis line, Providence Grief Support). Take care of yourself. Working with humans that are hurting can be taxing. Compassion fatigue can develop over time and it is important to have a ritual of self-care. Process and debrief with a colleague or friend that you trust. Do things that bring joy. Develop a mantra that helps compartmentalize and ritualize. For example, "It's their journey not mine."

Providence Grief Support

Standing Together is a free grief support group for youth in grades K-12. It is facilitated by trained staff and volunteers of Providence Hospice and Home Care of Snohomish County. 2018 dates: Jan. 13, Feb. 10, March 10, April 14, May 12, June 9
First Presbyterian Church 2936 Rockefeller Ave. Everett, WA 98201 - Call 425-261-4807 to register.



Developmental responses to Grief: https://www.dougy.org/docs/Developmental_Responses_2017.pdf

8 Simple Acts for an Unbearable time: http://www.refugeingrief.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/RiG_infographic-EarlyGrief-PrintReady.pdf

Holiday Tips: <http://www.refugeingrief.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/holiday-tips.pdf>

Do this, Not That - how to help a grieving friend:

http://www.refugeingrief.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/RiG_infographic-DoThisNotThat-PrintReady.pdf

Book: Healing a Teen's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas for Families, Friends and Caregivers by Alan D. Wolfelt

Book: When a Friend Dies by Marilyn Gootman

Book: Facing Change by Donna O'Toole

Journal: Chill and Spill (from Art with Heart - Seattle)

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