

Activity for Ninth –Twelfth Graders

Objective: For students to understand that grief is a normal response to any loss.

Time: 20-30 minutes

Preparation: 1. Print out the Bill of Rights for Grieving Teens 2. Write this quote on the board. *“Grief is not a disorder, a disease, or a sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical, and spiritual necessity—the price you pay for love.”*
Earl Grollman

Lesson Plan:

1. Introduce the word loss. Write the word on the board and ask students to share what types of things they lose or have lost. Ex. a game, having to change schools, parents going through a divorce, sport’s injury, a competition, a friend, a home if they had to move, a pet, a person who may have died etc. Do not make suggestions, but allow them to offer ideas.
2. Then write the word grief on the board. Ask the students if they know what this word means. Explain that grief is all the feelings we have when we lose something or someone: sad, mad, scared and happy.
3. Explain that grief is normal. Ask the class to read the quote on the board and discuss whether they think it is true or not.
4. Explain that while there are many losses in life, the death of someone you know is the hardest one to cope with. Ask students how many of them have experienced the death.
5. Read the Grief Bill of Rights. Remind the students that it is similar to the Bill of Rights that was written at the beginning of the United States. Discuss their thoughts and reactions.
6. Ask the class what they think happens if people hold in their feelings of grief.
7. Watch this TED talk : How to Comfort a Grieving Teen.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySeZLAqcnuo> (This video does directly discuss the topic of suicide.) Ask the students what they think Bridget Park is saying about how to comfort someone who is grieving.
8. Ask the class what they could do to help classmates when they are grieving.
9. Visit www.childrensgriefawarenessday.org for more information about Children’s Grief Awareness Day.





The Bill of Rights for Grieving Teensⁱ

A grieving teen has the right . . .

1. to have my own unique feelings about the death. No one will feel exactly like I do. My feelings don't need to make sense to anyone else.
2. to know that grief is like the weather. It is not something I can control. I may have grief bursts that come out of nowhere.
3. to know the truth about the death, the deceased, and the circumstances of the death.
4. to have my questions answered honestly.
5. to be silent and not tell anyone what I am feeling or thinking.
6. to have people listen to me without giving advice or trying to cheer me up.
7. to come to my own understanding about the death.
8. to see the person who died and the place of the death.
9. to grieve any way I want as long as I don't hurt myself or others.
10. to be angry at death, at the person who died, at God, at self, and at others.
11. to have my own beliefs about life and death.
12. to be involved in the planning of rituals (funeral, memorials, viewings) and to participate in them if I choose to.
13. to not have to act like an adult or take on adult responsibilities.
14. to have irrational guilt about how I could have prevented the death. To have regrets about things I wish I had said or done.
15. to know that grief affects me emotionally, cognitively, and physically. I may be irritable and easily upset. Things that used to be easy for me to accomplish may be more difficult now. I may be forgetful, have trouble concentrating or paying attention. My body may ache, feel heavy or feel like it is going to burst.
16. I have the right to mourn or express my grief in my own timing. My grief is not a problem to be solved or something to get over. I don't know how long it will take for me to feel better. Please let me grieve at my own pace.
17. I have the right to not feel ashamed about my feelings and needs. My feelings of grief and my need for support are normal.
18. I have the right to think about my memories of the person who died. I have the right to talk about the person who died. Sometimes those memories will be happy and sometimes they may be sad. Either way, these memories help me stay connected to the person who died. The person died, not the relationship.
19. I have the right to have mixed feelings about the person who died. There may be qualities of the person who died that I miss terribly. There may also be things about them that I don't miss. I have the right to feel both ways about the person who died. I may be upset with the person who died for things they did to hurt me or I may be angry at them for dying.

ⁱ Adapted from the Grief Bill of Rights created by the teen support group at the Dougy Center in Portland, Oregon