



formerly HospiceCare of Boulder & Broomfield Counties

**COMMUNITYCARE**

Hospice | Supportive Services

## **Supporting Teens Ages 12-18 through Grief**

### **How Your Teen Understands Death:**

- Understands that death is permanent and inevitable
- Questions meaning of death/life, spiritual and religious beliefs
- May feel guilt, anger, maybe even some responsibility for death that occurred
- May still see self as invincible, "it will not happen to me"

### **Common Behaviors after Hearing of the Death of a Special Person**

- Avoidance or withdrawal in order to "escape" feelings or to be in control of feelings
- Peer relationship problems or change in peer group
- Decrease in academic performance or school attendance
- May feel alone and unable to communicate with parents or peers
- Engage in impulsive behaviors or high risk behaviors including driving fast, using drugs/alcohol

### **How to Help Your Teen:**

- Be available but respect need for privacy
- Provide opportunities for open and honest discussion
- Help them identify peers or other trusted adults with whom they can share thoughts/feelings
- Feelings and behaviors may be inconsistent and contradictory.
- Encourage participation in family good-bye rituals such as funerals or memorial services, be sure to be available for discussion re: what is involved in ceremony, who will be there, where the body will be (i.e. casket)
- Model healthy coping behaviors by taking care of yourself to support your child

### **Ways Your Teen Can Remember Your Special Person:**

Encourage expression of feelings; create opportunities to share positive memories about the special person who has died

- Create a playlist of favorite songs or songs that remind teen of loved one
- Use a journal to express inner feelings
- Create a special place in your room with pictures or keepsakes from loved one
- Carry a rock, heart, birthstone, wear something that reminds teen of loved one
- Create a memory box including photos, special moments shared, drawings descriptions of favorite memories or what your teen will miss most about loved one.

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