

Complicating Teen Grief for adults

Grief is difficult enough in and of itself. But sometimes it can become even more complicated by factors that can prolong the process and increase the pain and difficulty. They are:

- **The surviving parent/teacher's expression of grief.** We all look to the adults in our lives for cues on how to act, how to grieve. If teens have no healthy role models for this, then they may have difficulty finding healthy and appropriate ways to express their feelings.
- **Denying teen feelings and expressions.** Sometimes teen feelings and expressions of grief can be ignored by others because people are so uncomfortable with this topic and don't know how to deal with teens and their grief.
- **Thinking that nobody cares.** Teens may think that nobody cares, but many people just don't know how to act or what to say, so they choose to do or say nothing.
- **Feelings of confusion or guilt about the person who died and the way he/she died.**
- **Acting younger than they are for an extended period.**
- **Indifference toward the death.** It may be easier to act indifferent, but at some point, teens will need to deal with their loss. The sooner they deal with it, the sooner they will get back to their lives.
- **Unable to put thoughts and feelings into words.** This is a common problem for all of us. The pain is just too big and too deep to put into words. A song, a poem or a saying can sometimes help others know what they are feeling and thinking.
- **Lack of opportunity to share feelings and emotions at home, at school and with friends.**
- **Change in family role and responsibilities.** Teens may have to take on more responsibilities and help out more at home. This can add stress and take time away from school work, friends and working through their grief.
- **Unstable family life after the loss.**
- **Difficulty believing that the death is real.**
- **Unresolved grief from an earlier loss.** If teens have already experienced a significant loss and have not worked through that experience yet, they may need time and help to deal with it before the present loss can be fully addressed.

These are red flags that may require professional help:

- Drug and alcohol use
- Increased sexual activity
- Extreme withdrawal from friends and family
- Statements of suicide
- Anti-social or criminal behavior
- Acting younger than chronological age for an extended period of time