



Counseling Bereaved Teens: Bridging the Communication Gap

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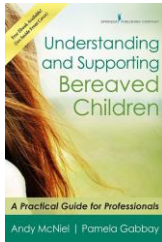
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Understanding and Supporting Bereaved Children: A Practical Guide for Professionals



"Give sorrow words."

William Shakespeare



Today's Teenagers: Post Millennials

- Born 1997 or later
- Being raised by Generation X parents (mostly)
- Smartphone technology is a given
- Texting is a primary form of communication
- Reputation of "always on" technology



Trends in Behavior and Mental Health

- Grew up under "No Child Left Behind"
- Technology results in less face-to-face time with friends
- Increased levels of mental illness in adolescents
- "Slow life strategy" trending
- More caring for others
- Inclusive and concerned with social justice





Factors that Promote Health

- Healthy peer relationships
- Mutual trust
- Physical activity
- Connection with others a part from technology
- Clear expectations
- Accountability
- Positive affirmations of personality and preferences
- Positive relationship with the adults in their lives





Health in Bereaved Teens:

The Critical Role of Communication

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Communication is more than talking



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One of the top factors that promotes health in teenagers after a death is:

Being listened to and feeling understood

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Factors that Open Communication and Connection

- Nurturing interaction: Demonstration of concern and caring
- Acceptance and inclusiveness: Feeling that others accept them unconditionally
- Mutual respect: For personality and opinions
- Honesty and telling the truth
- Providing choices



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Facilitating Communication and Building Rapport with Bereaved Teens

- Set expectations and guidelines WITH them
- Make participation optional
- Listen without judgment
- Allow them to lead the conversation
- Show interest in what is important to them
- Incorporate music and technology

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Special Considerations for Difficult Conversations with Bereaved Teens

- Death notification
- After a death due to suicide
- After a death due to homicide
- After a death due to overdose
- After a death due to illness
- Considerations for military families

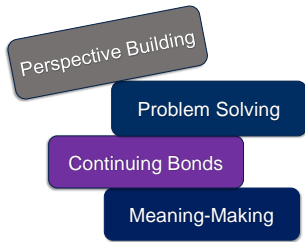
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Techniques for Helping Bereaved Families Relate to and Communicate with Each Other

- Including family members in shared rituals
- Facilitating activity based family sessions
- Encouraging "teenager-led" family outings
- Helping families find activities that are of mutual interest
- Incorporating music and technology into family support sessions
- Providing support groups for adults focused on sharing ideas for parenting and connecting with their teenagers



Modes of Support





Meaning-Making

- Search for meaning after a loss
- Narrative reconstruction
- Helps teens to adapt to their loss
- Incorporate new meaning into their lives





Continuing Bonds

- Helps teens to adjust to the loss of the relationship
- Teens redefine the relationship in light of their loss
- The relationship with the deceased continues through these connections



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Problem Solving

- Practical model for problem solving
- Helps teens with examining options available to them
- Facilitates decision-making with teens

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Perspective Building

- Allows teens to process information about the loss from their point of view
- Allows teens to think about the loss from other points of view
- Allows teens to think about and incorporate new information into their existing schemas

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Activities for each Mode of Support

Handwriting lines for notes under 'Activities for each Mode of Support'

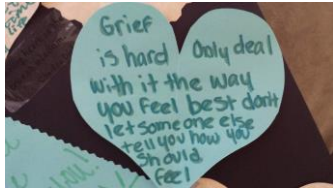


Meaning-Making

Handwriting lines for notes under 'Meaning-Making'



Expressive Arts



Handwriting lines for notes under 'Expressive Arts'



Painting My Memories



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Continuing Bonds

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Writing a Letter to/ From the Person Who Died

Dear, dear Thomas,

I am sending this letter to you in my heart to say the one thing I probably never said enough while you were here. Thank you. Thank you for being there for me for all the practices, games and Ford trips. You were my biggest fan through it all and I couldn't and don't believe Christmas. Thank you for letting me know when I was wrong and sometimes the when I was being a brat. And best of all, thank you for showing me how to live.

People often tell me that I sound like you, and to me there is no greater compliment. I admire you so much and I hope that I am being a bit that would make you proud. I know you are still with me, still talking, cheering me on every step of the way. I find your presence on fields all the time, and I like to think it's you reminding me that you love me. I know I've still got some tough times ahead, but to make what I want and always your baby I'll be...

I love you.

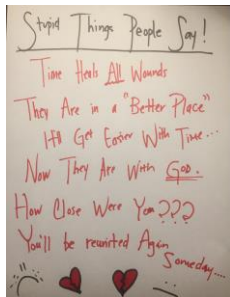
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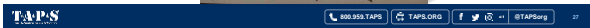
Staying Connected





Problem Solving





Mom Died... Not Sure What to Say

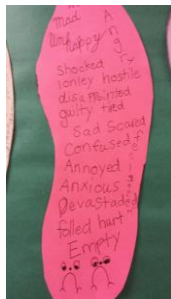


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Perspective Building

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Walking in My Grief-Filled Shoes



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What Grief Has Taught Me

I have learned that life should not be taken for granted. People should live their lives as best as they can.

I have learned that I am not alone in my grief and that everybody expresses their grief differently.

I learned that ~~the~~ feelings should not be kept ~~inside~~ inside, or ~~staying~~ they will only grow.

I learned that things can just be swept underneath the carpet.



What Grief has taught me

- I'm not alone
- I'm a strong person
- My family is always there for me.
- Never go to bed mad
- Love everyone even if you fight
- Don't take things for granted
- Live every day like its your last
- No one can tell you how or what you feel.
- Love the little things in life.



Working with Bereaved Teens in Various Settings

- Individual settings
- Group settings
- School settings
- Camp settings



Fostering Posttraumatic Growth

- Emerges from grappling with the death
- A transformative process
- Different than resilience
- Opportunities for fostering PTG
 - Peer to peer support
 - Nationwide teen programs
 - Nationwide bereavement camps
 - Programs through TAPS



The Role of Social Media



Questions?



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About the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing

The TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®, through an alliance with HFA, serves as a resource and training center, providing programs for both professionals working in the field of grief and loss and the public. The TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® was launched in March 2018.



Upcoming TAPS Institute Programs

- October 24 — *Handle with Care: Supporting Your Grieving Body, Mind and Spirit*
 - **Held at TAPS Institute, Arlington, VA, 10:30 am – 3 pm ET**
 - Presenters: **Heather Stang**, Author of *Mindfulness and Grief*, TAPS Board of Advisors and **Min Krishnamurthy**, Nutritionist for Giant Food
- November 1 — *Accessing Comfort Care for Veterans and First Responders with Serious Illness*
 - **Live webinar, 12-1:30 pm ET**
 - Presenter: **Andrew Balafas**, Regional Veterans Community Liaison, VITAS Healthcare
- November 8 — *Passed and Present: Keeping Memories of Loved Ones Alive*
 - **Live webinar, 12-1:30 pm ET**
 - Presenter: **Allison Gilbert**, author of *Passed and Present: Keeping Memories of Loved Ones Alive*



Continuing Education

If you would like to receive CEs for this program, please go to
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CE Code: **TEEN**
