



Talking with Teens About Death and Dying: Bridging the Communication Gap

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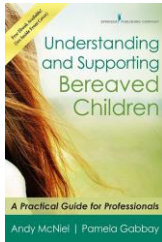
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Understanding and Supporting Bereaved Children: A Practical Guide for Professionals



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



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Factors that Promote Health

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



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

Being listened to and feeling understood

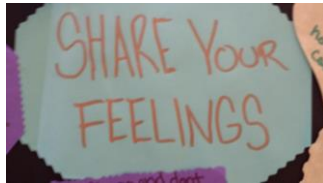
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Factors that Open Communication and Connection

- 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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Communication is more than talking



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Building Rapport with Bereaved Teens

- Listen without judgment
- Allow them to lead the conversation
- Show interest in what is important to them
- Incorporate music and technology



Ideas for Connecting With and Communicating With Your Teen

- Include your teens in shared family traditions
- Encourage “teenager-led” family outings
- Meet them where they are
- Find activities that are of mutual interest to everyone in the family





Special Considerations for Conversations with Bereaved Teens

- After a death
 - Due to suicide
 - Due to homicide
 - Due to overdose
 - Due to illness



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.

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Family Dynamics

Roles & Responsibilities

Expectations & Values

Environment & Atmosphere

Rituals & Routines

Beliefs & Superstitions

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The Strengths of the Parent-Teen Relationship

- Social cues and problem solving
- Security and predictability
- Moral support and encouragement

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Parent and Teen Adaptive Tasks

- Reestablishing security and safety
- Restoring routines
- Affirming and maintaining boundaries
- Adapting to new roles and responsibilities

The Role of Social Media



Growth Through Grief and Hope for the Future



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.



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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*
