



To: Our colleagues throughout Quebec From: The Centre of Excellence for Mental Health



# COVID-19: Supporting Students Coping with Loss

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on our physical and mental well-being. In addition to being faced with severe illness and even death of loved ones, COVID-19 has produced a collective loss of normalcy. Traditional ways of coping with death, loss and the grieving process have been transformed.

As well, there is a growing awareness among educators that as a result of COVID-19, students are experiencing many different yet significant senses of loss. For example, they have lost social and physical connectedness, in addition to significant milestones such as, graduations, sporting events and school activities. For some, the pandemic has engendered a sense of vulnerability, feelings of uncertainty about the future, and the loss of the youthful sense of invincibility.

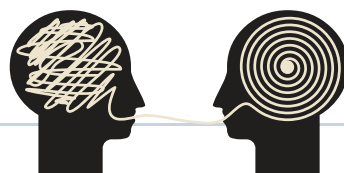
As educators and teachers we have the unique opportunity to support students in discovering the positive and healthy ways of coping with the losses they have experienced.

## How Educators Can Support Students

- Create a warm and inviting environment giving students permission to share their experiences - NOT Grief Counselling
- Involve the family and student in discussions about what support is needed and what it should look like-Be sure to respect privacy
- Provide safety in space and individuals who can offer comfort and reassurance

## What to Say - What not to Say

### Helping Students Understand Feelings Related to Loss



- ✓ Invite the conversation. Allow children to feel safe to share their personal experience of loss
- ✓ Grieving is not an event, it is a process. Let children know that you really want to understand what they are feeling and/or what they need
- ✓ Listen more, talk less. Keep your comments brief
- ✓ Express empathy. Demonstrate compassion and avoid judgment.
- ✓ Accept varying expressions of emotion. Expressions of sadness, anger, selfishness, or confusion are common in grieving children
- ✓ Help students feel empowered to choose healthy ways of managing their feelings and to develop healthy coping strategies
- ✓ Encourage students to continue the discussion with parents or other trusted adults

For more information about supporting students' grief following death or illness, watch these videos:



<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AVOID SAYING	INSTEAD SAY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
"I know how hard this must be for you" "At Least" (At least he isn't suffering...) "You must be feeling..."	"I want you to know that you can tell me how this makes you feel" "People often have strong feelings at times like this. What is it like for you?"
"You need to be strong for your family"	"How are your family members doing?" Do you have concerns for them?"
"I know how you must feel"	"I have experienced loss too. I wonder how it must be for you."

### Helpful websites about student grief:

- <https://www.childrenandyounggriefnetwork.com/>
- <https://childrengrieve.org/>
- <https://grievingstudents.org/>
- <https://www.dougy.org/>

### Helpful Tip-sheets about death and loss:

- <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/grief.pdf>

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/addressing-grief>

## Helpful RESOURCES



If you have found this postcard to be helpful and informative, please share it with colleagues. Dissemination of information about mental health is the first step toward promoting better mental health!

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