



Going Back to School After a Death

Back to school season can fill kids and caregivers alike with anxiety and dread over what the year will look like when someone important has died. As much as we want things to stay the same, a death impacts every aspect of our lives. Here are a few things to remember as you send your child back to school after they experience a death:

Talk to your child about going back to school

No matter the age of your child, opening up the conversation is a good start. Your child may have many feelings about returning to school, but may not know how to express them aloud. Listening and validating their feelings is an important first step. Remember that although the transition can be tough, the schedule and routine of school can be helpful and comforting for a child after a death.

Talk to your child's teacher and school counselor

It is important that your child's teacher and counselor know that someone important to your child died. Speaking to school staff can also be an opportunity to learn about the available support systems. There may be a grief support group in your school or community that they can attend. Before speaking to school staff, ask your child what details, if any, they are comfortable sharing with teachers, counselors, and classmates, in order for them to feel in control of the situation.

Anticipate questions that others may ask

Your child's friends may be curious about what happened to the person who died, or may want to ask your child how they are doing. Although these questions may be well-intentioned, they can also be uncomfortable for your child. Kids just want to be "normal" and being known as the "kid who had someone die" can make them feel different. It can be upsetting to have attention drawn to the death, and it is important to discuss how your child will answer those questions. Reassure your child that they have the right to not answer questions and to only share the information they are comfortable giving.

Create a safety plan for school

There may be times when your child is in school and feels an intense wave of grief, is asked a question that makes them uncomfortable, or just needs a break. Identify what they can do in that situation to cope. This may include talking with their counselor, getting a drink of water, writing in a journal, or something else that will help your child feel more settled and able to refocus in school. Identify a few safe people in the school for your child to talk with when they are uncomfortable. It is a good idea to share this plan with your child's school counselor, teacher, and other relevant school staff.

Give your child permission to have a great year

Often after a death, kids can feel guilty for laughing and having fun. Let your child (and yourself) know that there are still fun, happy, and silly moments to be had, and that you are there to support them.

Learn more about Uplift's services

Uplift's **Philly HopeLine** is a free, confidential helpline staffed by our Master's level clinicians. The Philly HopeLine is open to all youth and caregivers in the Philadelphia region. Call if you'd like to sign up for grief groups, receive emotional or grief support, identify community resources, or get on the list for an in-school grief group. Interpretation service is available for more than 100 languages. Dial **833-PHL-HOPE (833-745-4673)** to speak to an Uplift clinician, or email PHLHope@UpliftPhilly.org.

A tip sheet from

Uplift Center for Grieving Children

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