

A QUICK GUIDE TO GRIEVING

HELPFUL THINGS TO SAY TO GRIEVING TEENAGERS

If you don't know what to say, then don't say anything! It's okay to say you are at a loss for words. Even better, share your tears with them. Nothing says, "I care" and "Jesus loves you" as powerfully as "I am sharing in your pain."

- "It's okay to say, 'It's sucks,' because it does."
- "It's okay to hurt, be sad, or be mad."
- "It's okay to be mad at God. He understands."
- "We all hurt for him/her and this situation."
- "No, you're right; life is not fair."
- "No, I don't understand what God was thinking either." (Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD...my ways are higher.")
- "Sometimes God delivers us from this a hard thing into the arms of our loved ones. Sometimes he delivers us through it, into His arms."

HARMFUL THINGS TO SAY TO GRIEVING TEENAGERS

We feel a lot of pressure to relieve another's grief—to fix what is broken. But it's not loving or helpful to give in to that pressure and say things that are trite, ridiculous, or negating.

- "It could have been worse." (What is worse than losing a loved one?)
- "It was his/her time." (This adds to their anxiety: "I could be next.")
- "It was God's will." (So you're saying you know God's will for others' lives?)
- "God works in mysterious ways." (Duh! And this makes us sound idiots.)
- "He/she's in a better place" (Wasn't this place, with all his/her friends and family, good enough?)
- "You need to be strong." (Why? Even Jesus cried. Crying is not a sign of weakness.)
- "You'll be okay." ("But I'm not right now.")
- "Man up/Suck it up/Get over it." (No, grieving is a process and kids must rush through it—and men grieve, too.)

- "Get your mind off it." ("This important person in my life is dead, so how am I supposed to get my mind off of that?")
- "I hope he/she knew Jesus." (Not a great idea to add fears about their well-being to the trauma of the situation.)
- "Don't be mad at God—that's a sin." (God is big enough to understand and handle our emotions.)
- "He/she got what he/she deserved." (We might not say it this bluntly, but it's easy to imply.)
- "When you die, do you know where you're going?" (This is NOT what they need to hear in their moment of grief, nor can they process it.)

HOW TO START A DISCUSSION ABOUT GRIEF

Use open-ended questions and topical "kick-starters" to help your teenagers open up about their grief. For example:

- Ask students to tell about their favorite memory and/or how they met.
- Avoid questions that require yes or no answers.
- Avoid "why" questions—most often, there's no clear answer to them.

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