

MINISTERING TO GRIEVING TEENS

1. Ministering to grieving kids is one of the most important things you'll ever do. Do you really want to impact teenagers? Do you want your ministry to last long after you're gone? Then learn how to help your students through the grieving process.

Grieving students desperately need guidance. They need someone to walk with them-to offer comfort and support.

2. Listening is the most important "action" you can take.

Two years after they've experienced a death, a grieving teenager won't remember your words, but they'll remember your presence, and that you listened well.

3. You can't "fix" a grieving teenager. This is a crucial truth to understand, especially for men-we're driven to fix problems, and it drives us crazy when we can't. Your grieving students need you to focus on *them*, not their problem. The bible does not read: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be *fixed*." The blessing is in the *comfort* offered. Grief isn't bad- it's a natural response to a deep loss. We're called to guide grieving kids to God, where they can find true comfort.

4. There's no right way to grieve. Sure, it's a cliché- but this little truth is paramount to a grieving teenager. Kids want to be "normal," maybe more than anything else. As long as they're not hurting themselves or others, any expression of grief is good.

5. Love is the main thing. Truth is important in a crisis, but nothing's more powerful than love. Grieving kids have a portal that's open to their souls like no other time in their lives. You dare not walk through that portal with anything less than unconditional love to offer.

6. Don't put time limits on kids' grief. Our North American culture has an unwritten rule that grief has a one-year "statute of limitations." When the year is up, a grieving teenager should be "getting over" the death. They're wrong. Grief is like a succession of waves. Some of the waves are soft and pleasant; others will rise up and crush you. Who knows which wave your grieving students will face day to day? But they should know those waves will roll in to their "shore" for the rest of their lives. As time goes on, there will be fewer crushing waves. But the person your grieving student becomes depends largely on how the people around them enter into the crisis with them.