

Talking with children in times of tragedy

The sudden loss of a student or adult in the school system is a tragic event and can be a point of crises for the school system. The school community's response to the death situation will set the stage for how well people cope with the loss. The best approach to a death is to acknowledge the death, encourage people to express their emotions and feelings, and provide adequate supportive assistance and counseling.

There will be a District Crisis Team at Sterling to help our students and staff with the grieving process.

Grief:

Grief is the sorrow, emotions, and confusion we experience as a result of the death of someone important to us. Grief is mourning the loss of that person and mourning for ourself.

All people grieve differently, depending upon their own life experiences. However, all grief is painful, and like all other pain, the body's first reaction to grief may be a feeling of numbness as if one were in shock.

Guidelines For Helping Someone Who Is Grieving

When we are required to respond to a death, we ask ourselves: What should I do? What should I say?

A few suggestions are:

- The best action is to take some kind of action. Let the students know how you feel, encourage them to express their feelings and provide support to those who are grieving. Do not restrict the amount of time for the conversations to be finished so that the student does not sense "urgency" in your conversation.
- Be a good listener and accept the words and feelings being expressed. Don't minimize the loss and avoid giving cliches and easy answers.
- Encourage the grieving person to care for themselves.
- Use simple questions. "Can I help?"
- Use simple suggestions. "It's okay to let it out."
- Use simple comments. "It must really hurt." "You must feel very bad."

Acknowledge and accept your own limitations. Sometimes you may wish to have the help of outside resources (ask our specialist in the School or District Crisis Team for assistance).