

10 Ways to Help Grieving Members

1. TAKE CARE OF YOU: As Club staff, you have to remember to take care of your own mental, physical and emotional well being. Grieving members will do better when they have a healthy adult providing a supportive relationship.

2. BE HONEST WITH MEMBERS: Discuss the member's grief in a simple, honest, direct and age appropriate manner. Members need to build supportive relationships with staff.

3. LISTEN: Listen to a member share their story about what happened. Let them ask you questions and answer their questions as best as you can. Do not be afraid to say, "I don't know."

4. RECOGNIZE A MEMBER'S GRIEF: Recognize when a member is grieving. It is normal for youth to feel an array of emotions, including sadness, anger, frustration and fear and to move in and out grief reactions or act like nothing happened. Try to engage one-on-one with a member if you are not sure how their grief is impacting them. Playing with them, doing an art project or sharing stories may help.

5. SHARE: Share stories about times in your life when you were afraid, sad or angry and how you dealt with these situations and what you learned. Sharing your stories can help normalize what the member is feeling and give them hope that things will get better.

6. BE CREATIVE: Clubs create a fun, safe and positive environment for members. Continue to give members a creative outlet through games and activities where they can express their feelings.

7. MAINTAIN CLEAR EXPECTATIONS: Clubs consistently communicate expectations and opportunities to members. Keep the rules and boundaries in your Club consistent. Youth may use their grief as an excuse for inappropriate behavior. While you should acknowledge the grief, you should remind them good character development and leadership means being accountable no matter how they feel.

8. REASSURE THE MEMBER: Remind the member that you care about them. A child experiencing grief or loss may have their sense of security shaken and need supportive relationships.

9. HELP THE MEMBER CREATE MEMORIES TO HONOR THEIR GRIEF: Rituals or traditions can give members tangible ways to acknowledge their grief or honor the memory of someone they lose. Help the member decide which rituals or traditions they can create to help them express their grief.

10. BE PATIENT: Be patient when a member experiences grief. Grief can change us in many ways. A member may need more individualized attention while they are grieving as they continue to grow.