



Going Back to School & Routines

Take a deep breath.

It is normal to be nervous about sending your children back to a new school year after a death. This is a transition, for you and for them. After a death, when our children are grieving, it is our nature to want to protect them.

How can you prepare for a smooth transition?

1. Notify your child's teacher.

You want your child's teacher to be aware of the death. A new teacher likely will not know your child's typical behavior, makes it more difficult for them to notice behavioral changes. Let your child's teacher know about your child's normal habits, behaviors, and personality. Don't forget that your child may have multiple teachers and they should all be aware even if the time they spend with your child is far more limited. Make sure to let your child know that you will be talking to the school about the death. Discuss with them what they are comfortable having shared so they feel included in the process.

2. Speak with your child's school counselor.

After a death, children may exhibit changes in behavior: anger, trouble concentrating, isolation, hyperactivity, withdrawal, loss of interest in activities, depression, and slipping grades. These changes can be part of normal grief and adjustment, but if they persist it can be a sign that professional support is needed. Again, make sure your child knows that the school counselor is aware of the death and will be in communication with him/her, you, and the teacher.

3. Make a communication plan.

It will be important that you, your child's teacher, and your child's school counselor stay in communication in a way that will work for all parties. If you have concerns at home, don't hesitate to update your child's teacher and counselor so they can be aware, and request they do the same with you.

4. Prepare your child for other kids.

Let your child know that other kids may not understand death and may say things that are inappropriate. Tell your child that it is his choice what to share, if anything with other children. You may want to practice a response such as, "I don't feel like talking about that here." If other kids keep asking questions that make your child uncomfortable, tell your child to let you and the teacher know this is happening.



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5. Brainstorm coping tools for when things are tough.

Your child will inevitably have some tough days or moments at school. Spend time talking about things he/she can do to cope when having a hard time. This may mean talking to a specific safe friend, talking to a teacher or other trusted adult at the school, carrying something with him that helps him feel comforted or safe, or asking for time to go the school counselor. Sharing photos and favorite memories at home helps children focus on positive things.

6. Prepare your child for work with a school counselor.

If your child has not had much contact with the school counselor in the past, let him know who the counselor is, what their job is, and make a plan for you and your child to meet the counselor together in advance of school if your child is nervous.

7. Identify adults your child trusts.

There is a good chance your child will have a brand new teacher and may or may not have a relationship with the school counselor. If your child doesn't have an existing relationship with these people, it may be good to identify any adults in the school they do trust (like last year's teacher or coach). If there is someone your child trusts, let your child's teacher, counselor, and that individual know.

8. Give your child permission to enjoy school.

A new school year is exciting! It means a new grade, seeing old friends, new friends, and all sorts of other new experiences. After a death, a child may still be feeling confused, guilty, or self-conscious about having fun and being happy. Make sure to remind your child that you want him to enjoy school and that it is normal for him to be happy and have fun.

Taken From:



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