

Concept of Death

Teenagers are able to conceptualize that death is inevitable, universal, and irreversible.

Developmentally, teenagers are able to think abstractly and understand complex information

- Ask them how much information they wish to know and share honest information appropriately

Grief Response

Depression, denial, repression, anger, noncompliance or anxiety around own health and safety.

May feel embarrassed of emotions.

Normal to seek support from peers and prioritize peers over family.

May engage in high risk behaviors.

- Drug/alcohol use, pushing safety limits

If loss of a caregiver, may feel the need to take on caregiver role.

How You Can Support

Allow opportunities for direct, open dialogue about death.

Hold consistent limits/boundaries, balanced with allowing space for independence.

Encourage teen to identify a safe person they can talk to or reach out to outside of caregivers; teens may not openly express emotions/thoughts to caregivers for fear of making them sad or upset.

- Peer, counselor, coach, close relative

Be observant of any new roles they take on (caregiver) and foster age-appropriate interactions and activities.

Explore teenagers' desire to help with making decisions around individuals' death.

- Choose music or photos to be played during a funeral, when/where to spread a loved one's ashes

Reach out to local resources for peer support for teen.

- Camps for teens who have lost a loved one
- Grief counseling