

## Engaging with Grief and Loss at Camp

These are ONLY suggestions - every person's experience is different, as is their relationship to the one they lost.

Remember most importantly to SHOW UP and SHOW LOVE.

### Caring for yourself when you're experiencing grief:

- Let people help if you need or want it. Don't be afraid to say you don't.
- Give yourself time and space to feel and do whatever you need to do. Scream, cry, laugh, exercise, work, read, look at photos, tell stories. Whatever will bring you comfort.
- Don't feel like you need to speak. The quiet is okay.
- Validate your emotions and don't feel rushed to "get back to normal." If "normal" doesn't feel right, create a new normal.
- If "getting back to normal life" sounds like what you need, do it, and try not to feel guilty about it.
- If it feels good, share stories about the person who has died.
- Rest. Eat. Exercise. Keep taking care of yourself.
- Be patient with yourself and with others. Be aware that you may not react in your usual way to everyday situations, and that others may not know how to act and react around you.
- It's okay to remember and commemorate significant dates, and to feel differently on those days than you do on other days.
- Laughter is healthy. Try not to feel guilty enjoying moments in life.
- **Tears are a sign of strength.**

### Supporting others who are facing grief:

- ASK what someone needs; don't assume.
- Be aware that what you might need in this situation may not be what the mourner needs. Don't judge what they do or don't do.
- Don't speak first.
- Get comfortable with silence.
- Don't confuse grief with depression.
- Don't try to distract from the mourner's grief unless they asked you to.
- Use the name of the person who died.
- Don't justify the death (i.e. "he has gone to a better place," "God wanted her back").
- Don't feel guilty if you can't physically be with the mourner enough. Be with them emotionally and let them know you're thinking about them.
- Note important dates: birthday, anniversary, date of death, etc. to check in with the loved one if you think that might help them.
- Let the mourner know you're there if they need you. Remind them, check in. Avoid the "bereavement dump."
- Validate the sad moments and the happy ones.
- Don't be afraid to cry with the mourner. **Tears are a sign of strength.**

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