

## **Information Sheet for Parents in the Aftermath of Student Death**

You have been made aware that a student death has occurred in our school community. This is a very sad and traumatic event for all students, school staff, parents and the wider school community. Here is some information that may be helpful in assisting you and your child to manage during this difficult time.

Young people respond to death in unique ways, and a wide range of reactions are possible. Your child's response will be influenced by their personality, relationship with the deceased person, what is happening in their life and their ability to adjust to change. They may feel confusion, anger, aggression, withdrawal, fear, guilt, denial, blame, betrayal, abandonment, hurt and/or sadness. If you're concerned about your child's reaction and behaviour (such as changes in his/her socializing or school work) it is important to speak to his/her teacher, an Administrator or your family physician. If you're worried about the immediate safety of your child, Durham Region Crisis Response can be accessed by calling 905-666-0483 or 1-800-742-1890.

Parental understanding, reassurance and attention are very important at this time. Be guided by your child's need to talk, and make it clear to them that you will be available whenever they need you. Young people who have experienced other stressful situations in their lives (e.g., the separation/divorce of parents, the death of a relative/pet, moving house/school) may find it harder to cope. They may become upset and need to express their feelings about these other concerns, even if they had appeared to be coping. If your child is already using the services of a psychologist or counselor, make them aware of the death. Your child may have a lot of questions, and should be encouraged to talk to a trusted adult.

Adolescents often share their feelings about death with friends in conversations, e-mails, text messages and through social media. Young people should encourage help-seeking in any friends they have concerns about. An important message to share with your child is to tell an adult if they're worried about a friend.

Be aware that school staff will also be affected. While everyone will be working towards normalizing school routines, some staff will be managing difficult emotions. Adult counseling support is available to all school staff through a process outside the school.

Respond to community concern with respect. When you speak with other members of the community, reinforce that the best approach is to: respect the bereaved/affected family and encourage help-seeking actions in young people.