

WHAT DOES A GRIEVING CHILD OR TEEN NEED THE MOST?

- to have their loss and grief acknowledged
- to be safe and cared for – and to know this
- to have their own grief and coping style respected
- to be able to express thoughts and feelings in the ways they need to
- to be given regular reassurance
- to have people around them who genuinely care - and who show it
- to be given information about what's happening, in manageable amounts
- to have key information repeated
- to be involved in decisions, and events, where possible
- to have caring adults around who will listen, if they want to talk
- to have caring adults around who will answer any questions they may have with honesty
- to be supported to learn, and to make meaning, from their experience of loss
- to have people around them who will support their grief journey into the weeks, months and years ahead - and who don't forget their loss and its importance to them, their development and their future
- to be given some extra help if things have got too difficult for them to manage
- to be given hope and encouragement

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD AFTER WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

Parents and caregivers can help your children by:

- keeping calm, reassuring, encouraging, attentive, affectionate and loving.
- providing a strong physical presence - spend time with them and keep close to them – have regular eye contact.
- being honest with them – giving them straight and simple explanations and answers.
- keeping them informed about things that have happened and things to expect – and where you will be and when you'll be back if you're going away from them. Speak calmly.
- if they want to, letting them tell their story in words, play or pictures to acknowledge and normalise their experience - this may take patience if they want to retell it often.
- read to them stories about other children who have faced difficult times – contact **Skylight** 0800 299 100 or your local library
- role modelling, and managing in healthy ways, your own thoughts and feelings, and ways of coping with this difficult time.
- establishing everyday routines, and sensible behaviour boundaries, while allowing some flexibility when needed.
- accepting any of your children's changed behaviours at this stressful time, while encouraging and supporting them to return to more appropriate and positive behaviours.
- helping them to learn and use healthy coping strategies such as: getting enough sleep, eating well, drinking enough water, doing physical exercise, talking out things with someone they trust, being allowed to ask questions, having times to play and get their mind off things, spending time with friends, using the help and guidance of others etc.
- helping them to know ways to keep safe.
- letting them know what's happened was NOT their fault – checking in from time to time that they haven't misunderstood what's happened.
- getting them some extra help from professionals if their behaviour or reactions have become extreme or are disrupting their lives significantly. (e.g. your GP, a counsellor, social worker, family support agency, **Skylight** etc.)
- finding ways to remember with them how good life can still be – sharing hope for a positive future – finding things for them to enjoy, and things to look forward to.