komodo

Grief: A guide for school staff

How can you help your students:

Processing loss is difficult for everyone but it can be especially challenging for students who are still developing their emotional coping skills. Teachers can play an important role in providing support to their students during this process. Here are some ideas for teachers to support students through grief:

1. Create a safe space:
Students need to feel that they are in a safe and supportive environment. Teachers can create this by encouraging open communication, allowing students to express their feelings, and creating an accepting and empathetic classroom culture.

2. Offer support:
Teachers can provide support by offering a listening ear, expressing empathy, and checking in with students regularly to see how they are doing. They can also connect students with school counsellors or other resources that can provide additional support. Support can be just listening. We don't always need to problem solve.

3. Be flexible:
Grief can affect students in different ways, and it may impact their ability to concentrate, participate in class, or complete assignments. Teachers can be flexible in their expectations and provide accommodations to help students cope. The timeline of grief will differ for each student as well - be patient.

4. Provide opportunities for expression:
Encourage students to express their grief through art, writing, or other creative outlets. This can help them process their emotions and feel a sense of control over their experiences.

5. Educate students about grief:
Teachers can help students understand what grief is and what to expect during the grieving process. This can help students feel less alone and more empowered as they navigate their emotions.

6. Honour the memory:
Finally, teachers can help students honour the memory of their loved one by creating a memory wall, planting a tree or garden, or engaging in other activities that help them remember and celebrate the person who has passed away.

How can you navigate your own grief: Loss in the school community

Losing a student, colleague or another connection to the school community can be a devastating experience for teachers. It's important for educators and other school staff to take care of themselves during this time to avoid burnout and to be able to provide the best possible support to their students. Try these strategies to support your own wellbeing through this difficult time. We cannot pour from an empty cup.

1. Seek support:
One of the most important things staff can do is to seek support from colleagues, family, friends, or a mental health professional. They should talk to someone who understands and empathises with what they're going through. A problem shared is a problem halved - share your experiences and talk through your emotional rollercoaster.

2. Practice self-care:
Staff should prioritise self-care activities such as getting enough sleep, eating enough food, and engaging in physical activity. Engage in activities you enjoy, such as reading a book, watching a movie, or spending time with loved ones.

3. Set new expectations:
Grief is a rollercoaster. It may be helpful to reduce workload expectations and commitments. Be kind to yourself and what you can achieve in this time.

4. Reflect & process:
Staff should take time to reflect on their own emotions and process their grief. They may find it helpful to write in a journal or seek guidance from a mental health professional. You may need to take time away from school or students to do this.

5. Attend memorials:
This can be a way to process their own grief and support the person's family and friends. Sharing in this collective experience can be soothing and help you move through the stages of grief.

6. Find closure:
Staff may find it helpful to participate in a memorial or activity that helps them find closure, such as planting a tree or dedicating a space in the school in memory of the person.

Remember, it's okay to feel sad and take care of yourself. You need to be okay before you can help your students. By trying these suggestions, staff can take care of themselves and continue to provide the support their students needs during this difficult time.