



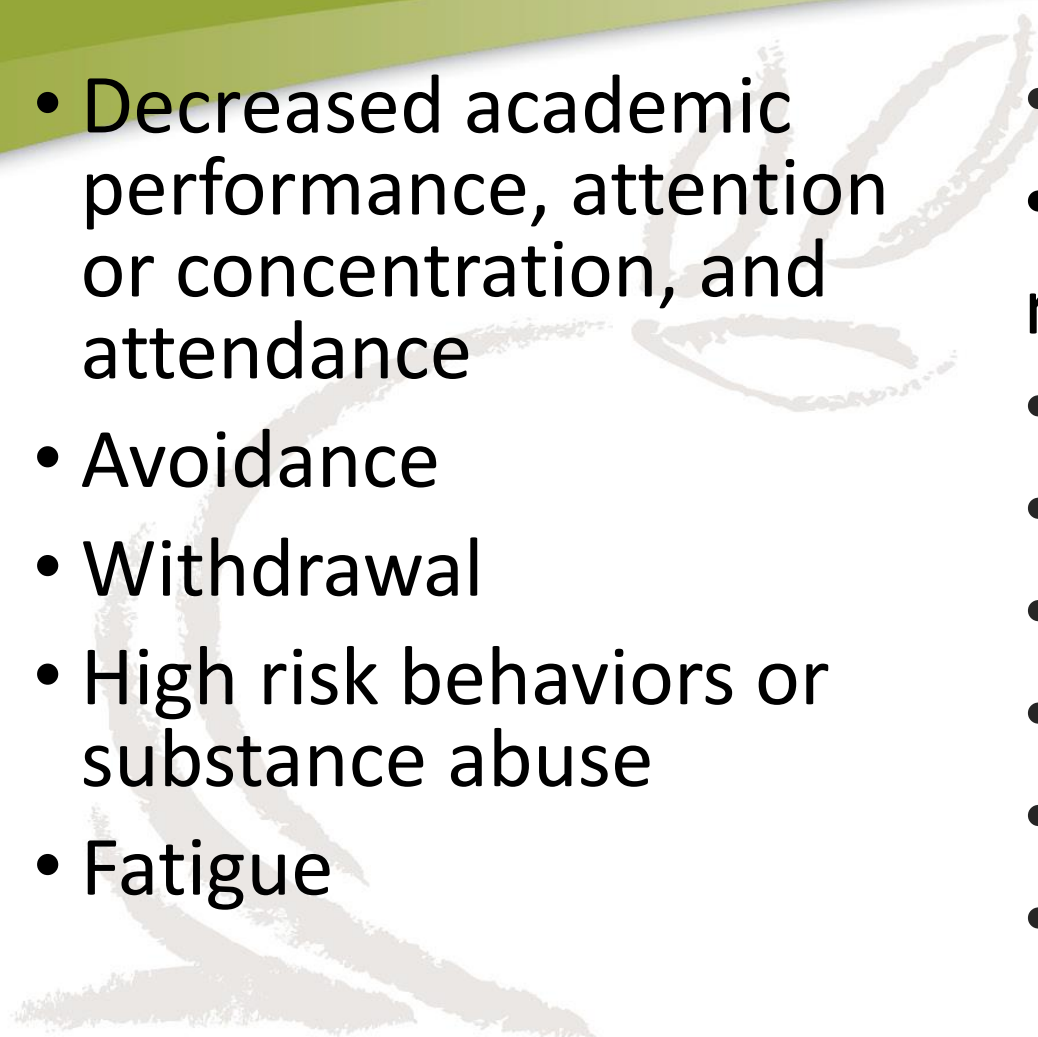
No One Knows What I'm Going Through: How to Support a Grieving Teen

Presented by Casey Branson and Andy Howell

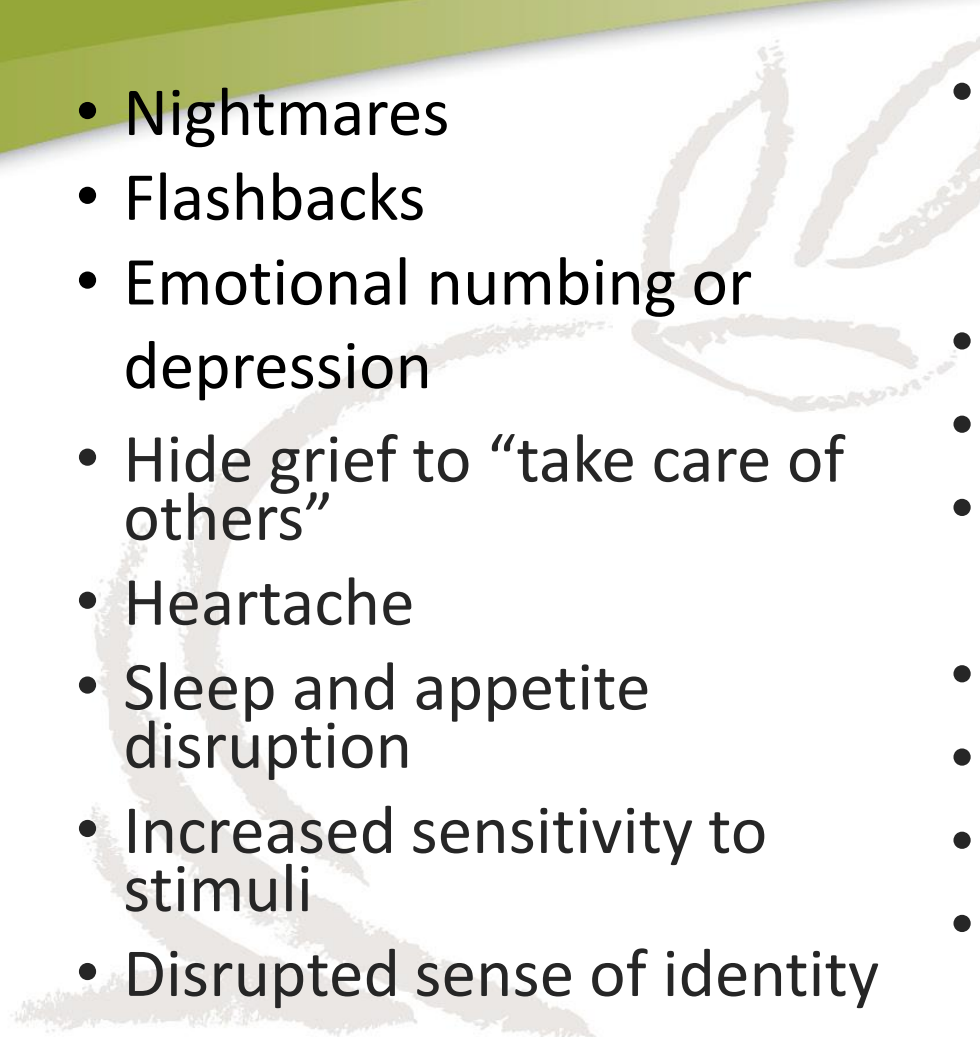
The Iceberg



What do you see on the surface?

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- Decreased academic performance, attention or concentration, and attendance
 - Avoidance
 - Withdrawal
 - High risk behaviors or substance abuse
 - Fatigue
 - Forgetfulness
 - Difficulty with peer relationships
 - Restlessness
 - Irritability
 - Anger, resentment
 - Staying busy
 - Crying
 - Defiance

What is hidden?

- 
- Nightmares
 - Flashbacks
 - Emotional numbing or depression
 - Hide grief to “take care of others”
 - Heartache
 - Sleep and appetite disruption
 - Increased sensitivity to stimuli
 - Disrupted sense of identity
 - Fear or anxiety
 - Unstable and unfair world
 - Guilt
 - Loneliness
 - Feeling helpless, out of control
 - Desire to join the deceased
 - Confusion
 - Denial
 - Affirmation or challenge of beliefs systems

Diversity of Teen Grief Reactions

- Every death is unique and experienced differently
 - Reactions and responses may change from day to day with teenagers
- The grieving process is influenced by many issues
 - Available social support systems
 - Circumstances of the death
 - Whether or not the teen unexpectedly found the body
 - The nature of the relationship with the person who died
 - The teen's level of involvement with the dying process
 - The emotional and developmental level of the teen
 - The teen's previous experiences with death

Diversity of Teen Grief Reactions

Cont..

- The death of a friend
- The death of a parent
- The death of a sibling
- A violent death
- Death by suicide
- Multiple deaths
- Death from chronic illness
- Accidental death
- Witnessing a death

Cumulative Losses



Cumulative Losses

***Sometimes, the death is not the main subject on the forefront of the teenager's mind or the death can create more feelings of loss**

- Person
 - Death
 - Estrangement
 - Divorce
 - Move
 - Incarceration
 - Change in friendships
- Support system
- Stability
- Innocence
- Opportunity
- Time
- Independence
- Childhood
- Faith
- Freedom
- Pets
- Ability to trust
- Culture
- Voice
- Health
- Status
- Safety
- Voice
- Home
- Property

Role Play Scenarios

What might you say to a teenager who:

- Is struggling with schoolwork
- Has excessive absences
- Exhibits an “I don’t care” attitude
- Appears to not be concentrating – is unable to focus and seems distracted
- Reacts to you with anger or explosive behavior
- Approaches you and is crying

Connecting With Grieving Teens

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How to be with Grieving Teens


- Be present and authentic
- Listen more, talk less
- Allow emotional expression
- Demonstrate empathy
- Intervene in harmful reactions when safety is a concern

Effective Communication Skills

- Attending behavior
- Silence
- Paraphrase
- Reflect
- Clarify
- Open-ended questions
- Blank access questions
- “I wonder...” statements
- Limited, appropriate self-disclosure



Roadblocks to Effective Communication

- 
- Directing
 - Advising
 - Warning
 - Judging
 - Diverting
 - Moralizing
 - Indifference
 - Sarcasm
 - Disparaging comments
 - Intrusive questioning
 - Talking down to teenagers
 - Too much self-disclosure

What Not to Say

- I understand just how you feel
- Well, at least...
- Oh, let me tell you about my loss...
- You should... or need to...
- Don't worry
- Things will get better
- It was God's will
- You need to be strong for your family
- Everything happens for a reason
- You need to get over it
- It's time to move on
- You must be really angry
- Time heals all wounds
- Just keep busy
- Don't cry, it'll be ok
- You'll get over it soon
- You weren't really that close

What to Say and Ask

- It sounds like this is a hard time for you.
- How is school going for you?
- What can I do to help?
- How are things going with your family?
- How are things going with your friends or peers?
- I'm here for you.
- I'll listen whenever you want to talk.
- I care about you.
- I'm so sorry to hear about ...**

Grief Triggers and Coping Strategies

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Triggers

- 
- Anniversaries
 - Sights
 - Sounds
 - Scents
 - Seasons
 - Colors
 - Places
 - Foods
 - Music
 - Restaurants
 - Cars/trucks
 - Movies
 - Certain words
 - Flowers
 - Holidays
 - Birthdays
 - Future
 - Clothing
 - Pictures
 - Mementos
 - Weapons
 - Calendar dates
 - Time of the day
 - Weather
 - Medical staff

Finding Coping Strategies that Work for Teens

- 
- Creative outlets
 - Photography
 - Music
 - Drawing
 - Molding clay
 - Writing poetry
 - Collage making
 - Cooking
 - Memorialization activities
 - Memory box, book, album, or item
 - Memory site
 - Reminisce
 - Make a comfort pillow
 - Look at photos
 - Write a Letter to/from the person who died
 - Favorite foods meal
 - Preserve handwriting
 - Body Regulation
 - Deep Breathing
 - Yoga
 - Spending time in nature
 - Meditation
 - Physical activities
 - Sports
 - Gym
 - Hiking
 - Keep a journal
 - Do something fun
 - Talk to a safe person
 - Peer support

Cork's Place

- Peer support groups
- People have the capacity to heal themselves
- Provide emotionally and physically safe spaces
 - Opportunities to talk about and process grief (and ALL the other experiences of being a teen)
 - Teen guidelines
- Choice is fundamental
- Groups offered on site and in high schools
- All volunteers go through 30 hours of training
 - Effective communication skills
 - Connecting with grieving teens

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Questions?

