

Family Conversations Starters, Prayers, and Scripture Guide

Death/Suicide of Friend or Family Member

When your teenager experiences the death of someone close to them, they are looking for people to walk with them through the pain. As a parent, here are some ideas of things you can talk about, ways to start the conversations, and ways to point them to the hope of Jesus in the midst of the tough times of life.

1. **Initiate the Conversation.** Don't just wait for them to come to you if you know a friend has died. They might approach you, but it's not likely. Even if they don't want to talk much in that moment, the fact that you asked how they were doing or tried to engage conversation will show them that you care about them and are there if they do want to talk.
2. **Ask if you can follow up.** Most likely they'll say yes. Maybe they don't want to talk today, but tomorrow they'll change their mind on that. Simply say, "I'm going to check in again tomorrow, okay? But if you want to talk before then, you know where to find me!"
3. **Pray with them.** This doesn't have to be anything complex or long. It could be something as simple as, "*Jesus, we are hurting right now as we grieve the loss of _____. Please help us in the days ahead and give us your peace and hope. Amen.*"
4. **Pray for them.** Not only look for opportunities to pray with them, but you can constantly be praying for them and their friends as they process the death of someone they knew. If they only knew the person from a distance, maybe your prayers center around how they might bring the hope of Jesus to their friends who are hurting even more.
5. **Share Scripture with them.** This could even be through a text message. It's great if you can open God's Word and find the comfort and hope it brings together, but it also works to leave them a note with some Scripture on their mirror (dry erase markers or post-it notes work well) or send them a text message letting them know you're thinking of them and that God is with them.

Conversation Starters

Here are some ideas of ways to engage your children in conversations about the situation.

- *I heard that a student from your school/sports team/etc. died. Did you know (student's name)?*
- *Do you want to talk about it?*
- *I just want you to know that it's okay to just be sad, okay? Can I share with you a Bible verse that is comforting to me when I'm sad?*
- *Do you think suicide is something that lots of teenagers consider at some point? Why do you think that is?*
- *Do you know where to get help if a friend was struggling with suicidal thoughts? (a teacher you trust, crisis hotlines, church leader, another friend's parent)*
- *Have you ever considered taking your life? (Don't freak out if they say yes as hard as that might be... listen and keep the conversation calm and open.)*
- *Who are some safe adults in your life that you can turn to when you're struggling with things? (Try to brainstorm together at least 4-5 names besides you.)*

Bible Verses and Text Messages

Use these Scriptures in your conversations with your student, or leave them in notes/text messages for them.

- *It's okay to be sad. Even Jesus cried when his friend Lazarus died (John 11:35). Maybe we can read that story whole story together when you get home today.*
- *Psalm 34:18 "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." I'm praying that you feel Jesus really close to you today when your heart is hurting.*
- *In Matthew Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." I'm praying that Jesus brings you some comfort today.*
- *I love you. And so does Jesus. Check out 1 John 3:1 when you get a chance today.*
- *I know it might seem impossible, but I'm praying for you today that you would experience peace in the midst of everything going on. (Philippians 4:7)*
- *Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Put these in your phone and have your teen do so in case they or a friend ever need them:

Crisis Texting Hotline (741741)
Crisis Phone Hotline (716-834-3131)