

## FACT SHEET 8

It's important for adults to know that teens can cope with stressful events in their life and that you can help - but your role is not to try to take the pain away or say things that minimise the importance of the event in their eyes.

To trivialise their fear, anxiety or opinions just reinforces that you don't understand.

*“ I was shocked and devastated, couldn't believe she'd died, confused, numb, angry. At first I couldn't comprehend what the tragic news was and I broke into tears. I was not even listening to what my Mum had actually said... I was totally shocked, uncontrollable tears, angry and scared. ”*

*“ Talking about things is the best thing you can do. If you're having problems talk it out. ”*

### How can you help?

- **Being allowed to grieve is one of the most important messages we can give to anyone who is grieving:** And that includes children and teens. Avoid messages which imply they are being silly, over-reacting or should get over it.
- **Adults need to pay attention to the feelings and reactions of teenagers:** Some of their behaviours may be puzzling and worrying like wanting to be left alone and hanging out in their room, or listening to loud, unintelligible music or sad, emotional CDs or getting a tattoo to memorialise a dead rock star. These are all ways teens express themselves.
- **Parents need to send messages through their words and their behaviour that say:**
  - \* *You matter.*
  - \* *This event is important in your life.*
  - \* *Your feelings aren't trivial.*
  - \* *It's alright to talk about how you are feeling.*
  - \* *You're not alone.*
  - \* *I understand why you're upset.*
  - \* *Even though your world's been turned upside down there are people around who can help.*



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