Grief & Loss: What can I do? What can I say?

These questions are better answered by thinking of “Who can I be?”

I can be a teacher who ... 

- soothes my own fearfulness in order to think and respond with calmness and leadership.
- views my role as a leader who models healthy, adaptive ways of accepting and coping with loss.
- provides an open classroom that honestly acknowledges what has happened.
- expects questions about what and why something happened and answers these as well as possible with the facts of the situation.
- isn’t afraid to say, “It makes no sense to me, either.”
- understands that the phrase “I know how you feel” is not helpful to most people.
- offers no comparison of how things could be better or worse.
- allows for shock when people need protection from feeling overwhelmed by the situation.
- views anger as normal and potentially helpful in mobilizing in tragedy but cautions when anger blames others.
- reassures students that they are not to blame for what happened.
- is unafraid of expressions of sadness and encourages these through words and pictures.
- offers security and trust by maintaining predictable schedules and usual routines and activities in the classroom.
- encourages creative ways for students to reach out to each other, to remember, and to tell their individual stories.
- understands how grief looks in children/adolescents.
- seeks the assistance of other professionals for support (school counselors, administrators, other teachers, etc.).
- understands that resolution of loss is not getting over or moving on, but living with what has happened.
- creates and facilitates a safe and supportive context of community around grief.

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