



Going back to school

It can be hard to go back to school, especially if a loved one died around the end of the school year or during the summer. Here are some things to think about as you and your family prepare to go back to school.

Do the teachers know what happened? It is a good idea to prepare the teachers/school guidance counselor so they get a heads up. They will want to know this information so they can be sensitive to your child's needs.

Guide the teachers and/or counselor to know how your child is coping and what they may need during the school year. Every child is different in what they need, so educate the school on how to specifically support your child. The school will be very thankful for the guidance.

Come up with a plan during the school day. Is there a person at school that the child feels comfortable talking to? Helping your child come up with a plan to cope with their grief while in school can help them feel more in control during the day. Emotions will come up; teaching your child ways of coping with their grief while still following through in their responsibilities can help children have a sense of control and stay in their routines, which is important.

Help your child prepare an answer to to the question, "how was your summer?"

This is a normal question everyone asks when you go back to school. It can be hard if you are caught off guard with this question, especially in front of peers. Coming up with a couple different answers for different people will help.

Not everyone really wants to know the details of your summer and asks out of habit. You know the people you can trust to give a more vulnerable answer to and who can get a quick response.

Below are examples of different levels of vulnerability. All are honest but change depending on who is asking. Prepare all your answers.

“My summer was ok.”

“It was not my best summer”

“My _____ died this summer, so it was a tough summer.”

“My summer was really hard, it is not the same since my _____ died.”

“It is really hard to be back in school, it reminds me of when my _____ died.
I really miss _____.”

When changes happen over the summer, going back to school can increase anxiety for children. Coming up with a plan and going through different scenarios can help children feel more confident and empowered as they go back to school.