

Dear RTM Community,

Thank you for your outpouring of compassion and support over the loss of our two Penncrest students. These deaths were unrelated. Shane Wolff passed late last evening as a result of being struck by a car and Benjamin Strain passed early this morning after a medical illness. We have been meeting with students throughout the day to provide them with opportunities to talk and process this loss. We want to also respect the privacy of the families of these students and support them during this incredibly difficult time.

Students experience loss and process grief in a variety of ways. As we work through responding to these difficult losses, we want to provide you with additional resources and information to support you and your children especially as we approach the winter break.

Resources:

<https://whatsyourgrief.com/helping-a-teenager-deal-with-grief-2/>

<https://www.greenville.k12.sc.us/lakeview/Upload/uploads/Parent%20Guide.pdf>

Grief Symptoms/Behaviors your child may experience:

Emotional Effects

Shock & Disbelief
Anger & Irritability
Depression/Sadness
Despair or Helplessness
Terror/Fear
Guilt or Self-Blame
Anxiousness or Worry
Loss of pleasure in activities
Confusion

Physical Effects

Fatigue
Insomnia or Disturbed Sleep
Stomach/Headaches
Decreased Appetite
Hyperarousal or Easily Startled

Cognitive Effects

Difficulty Concentrating
Trouble Making Decisions
Trouble Remembering
Impaired Self-Esteem
Intrusive Thoughts or Memories
Crying Easily
Change in Daily Patterns
Nightmares
Regression in Behavior

Social/Behavioral Effects

Social Withdrawal or Isolation
Increased Relationship Conflict
Refusal to go to school or activities
Risk Taking Behaviors (substance use)
Aggression or Oppositional Behavior

While the above are common symptoms, help your child understand that there is no RIGHT way to grieve. It is an individualized process and your child must grieve at his or her own pace.

Some things you can do:

Be available and ask if your child wants to talk, but realize a teen may not come to you
Listen to your child without judgment and let your teen tell his/her own story freely
Share your own feelings and concerns honestly
It is okay to tell your teen that you don't know answers to some difficult questions
Try to re-establish routine, with appropriate expectations, as soon as possible
Encourage your child to continue engaging in their typical activities, sports, etc.
Try not to take anger or irritability personally as it may be directed toward parents
Let your teen have his/her personal space
Emphasize the importance of seeking help when needed
Be aware of depression and/or suicidal ideation in your child
Accompany your child to funeral or viewings if they would like to go

Concerning Warning Signs that your child may need further support:

Current talk of feeling desperate, hopeless, and/or of having suicidal thoughts
Signs of depression, such as moodiness or withdrawal
Increased alcohol and/or drug use
Hinting at not being around in the future or saying good-bye
Impulsiveness and taking extreme or unnecessary risks
Lack of connection to family and friends (no one to talk to)

We will continue to support your children at school. If you feel that your child needs additional or immediate supports, the following resources are available:

Call 911 or 988 for a mental health emergency
Safe2Say (Information can be found [here](#))
Delaware County Connections Crisis Team: 1-855-889-7827
Contact your child's pediatrician/family physician

Just as loss brings our community together, so does rendering support to each other.
Please take care of yourselves and your children.

Regards,

Dr. DiMarino-Linnen