

# Family Support Guide

When a school community experiences the loss of a student, parent, or staff member, families often look for guidance on how to support their children, themselves, and one another. This handout offers compassionate, practical tools rooted in prevention, connection, and emotional wellness. Thrive Together and Gals Institute are committed to the mental wellness of the families and youth in our community, review the provided information and if you need further support do not hesitate to contact our team.

## Talking Points for Families

- Keep language simple, honest, and age-appropriate.
- Validate feelings: "It makes sense you feel sad/confused/angry."
- Follow the child's lead.
- Reassure them about safety.
- Keep routines gentle and predictable.

## Common Reactions

- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Irritability or big emotions
- Difficulty concentrating
- Clinginess or separation worries
- Physical complaints (stomachaches, headaches)
- Asking repetitive questions
- Wanting to be close or wanting space

## What helps

- Predictable routines
- Extra patience and connection
- Gentle check-ins
- Opportunities for expression (drawing, movement, music, talking)

## Red Flags That May Signal a Child Needs Additional Support

- Persistent sadness, irritability, or anger.
- Withdrawal from friends or activities.
- Physical symptoms like headaches or stomachaches.
- Difficulty concentrating or school avoidance.
- Trauma-related indicators such as nightmares or repetitive play about the event.

