

## **POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN TALKING WITH TEENS ABOUT DEATH**

**Listening is probably the single most important thing you can do for someone who is grieving.** This means active listening, or listening in order to feel what that person is feeling.

If the subject of death makes you uncomfortable, understand that most people feel the same way. But realize that there is a real need for the survivor to talk. Don't worry about being conversational. It is simply more important to listen.

### **Do teens grieve like adults?**

Teens grieve deeply but often work very hard to hide their feelings. Fearing the vulnerability that comes with expression, they look for distractions rather than stay with the grief process long enough to find real relief. Feelings can be turned off quickly, much like flipping a light switch. Teens can act as if nothing has happened while they are breaking up inside. You may observe teens who take on the role of caregiver to family members or friends, in effect denying their own grief.

### **Who do teens trust and talk to?**

Teens often trust only their peers, believing that no one else can understand how they feel and how they react to life's problems. Relationships with friends can be deep and meaningful, sharing conflicts occurring at home and other details about their personal lives.

### **How can adults gain the trust of teens?**

To gain the trust of teens, adults must become good, nonjudgmental listeners. Let teenagers know that you are interested in them, in their view, in their ideas and thoughts. Let them know that you like and care for them. Support their ideas or gently introduce new ways to approach their ideas. Acknowledge their grief and offer your thoughts of how to ease their pain.