

# WHAT **TO** SAY

## TO STUDENTS DURING A TRAGEDY.

### FOCUS ON THIS

#### LISTENING

It's easy to feel pressure to have all the right things to say in a tragedy, but often the most helpful thing you can do is listen. Listen to stories. Listen to feelings. Just listen.

#### FEELING

Ask how each student is feeling. Every tragedy is unique and every student will experience it differently. Help them manage those emotions by learning to voice them.

#### REMEMBER

When dealing with death, divorce, or any kind of loss, remembering is an aid to the grieving process. Ask students to tell you their favorite memories.

#### SAY SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

- I'm so sorry for your loss.
- I hate that you're going through this.
- I know this is really hard.
- Tell me a story about this person.
- We're going to walk through this together.

# WHAT **NOT** TO SAY

## TO STUDENTS DURING A TRAGEDY.

### AVOID THIS

#### CLICHÉS

We say them when we don't know what else to say. We say them because someone said them to us in a tough time. But they aren't helpful. Avoid clichés like the plague. (Get it?)

#### ANSWERS

Let's be honest. Most of the time you don't have all the answers. And even if you did, it may not help. Avoid trying to give answers to the "why" questions of tragedy.

#### TIMELINES

There's no right amount of time for mourning. So, be sensitive when making statements about "moving on" or "getting over." Each person will grieve at their own pace.

#### DON'T SAY THIS:

- Everything happens for a reason.
- How are you?
- You'll get over this.
- God just needed another angel.
- At least you have your mom/dad/friends/etc.
- Don't cry.

Just because it's true doesn't mean it's helpful.