ADOLESCENT GRIEF

The specific reasons bereaved adolescents have difficulty with mourning in healthy ways are often multiple and complicated. The major roadblocks are related to concurrent developmental tasks, the suddenness and unexpectedness of the death, unique environmental conditions, and the potential relationship conflict.

Some of the more common complications of grief are as follows:

- Symptoms of chronic depression, sleeping difficulties, restlessness, and low self-esteem.
- Academic failure or general indifference to school related activities.
- Deterioration in relationships with family and friends. Often there is difficulty in forming intimate relationships in adulthood.
- Acting out through a variety of means. For example, drug and alcohol abuse, fighting, inappropriate risk-taking, and sexual acting-out.
- Denial of any problems with grief with an accompanying image of hyper-maturity.
- Symptoms of chronic anxiety, agitation, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating.

This list is not intended to be all-inclusive. Different adolescents will experience a wide variety of complications when they are not allowed or encouraged to mourn. Their symptoms and acting-out behaviors are actually “calls for help.”