

IF YOU'VE WONDERED...

"What should I tell people?"

When a person dies, you can be thrown into a lot of challenges you've never encountered before, including figuring out how to talk to others about what happened. If you've been out of your regular routine, or if some important people in your life aren't aware of what you've been going through, you might wonder how to bring it up or what you should say or not say. If your person was sick for a while, or their death was in the news or otherwise made public, many people might already know what happened. But if this loss was a shock, or if you are in a new environment such as a new school or church, you might be facing sharing this news with a variety of people. You might wonder about how to bring up the topic, how much detail to give, and if there are parts of the story you should avoid telling others. This can be especially complicated if this person died by suicide, because of violence, or in another way that makes details harder to talk about. You might also wonder who needs to know, and if it's okay to avoid talking to others about your loss.

➤ What the Bible says:

The Bible presents grieving not as a private weakness but as a shared practice within the people of God. The Bible actually encourages lamenting with others. This is the blessing that Jesus indicates is available for those who mourn. Jesus teaches, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Mourning with others can allow God and others to offer comfort. Mourning is not treated as failure but as a pathway where God meets people with mercy and hope. Early Christian communities practiced bearing one another's burdens, praying through suffering together, and comforting one another in times of loss. Lamenting together in community creates space for honesty, compassion, and expectation. Sharing with others can bring honesty about pain, compassion toward one another, and expectation that God listens and responds.

Throughout Scripture, grief is often expressed in community settings. The Psalms include many communal laments where the whole group brings pain, confusion, and loss before God together. The prophets call communities to mourn injustice and tragedy side by side, reminding them that shared sorrow can also build shared faith. In the New Testament, believers are instructed to "weep with those who weep," showing that entering another person's grief is a spiritual act of love, not something to avoid or fix too quickly. The Bible thus encourages us to share with others as we are able so that we can find the support that we need in those moments.

➤ What you could explore:

Who do you want to support you? One of the reasons to talk to others about loss and grief is to connect with support that you need. Think about the people in your life who are in a position to help you, or who you naturally feel comfortable with. This could include friends and their parents or families, teachers or other school staff, adults you trust in your faith community, coaches, or other people who are important to you.

What's important for people to be aware of? You might want people to simply know that your person died, or when or how it happened. You may want others to know more about how you're feeling currently or what you're doing to cope. Sometimes you may need or want to tell teachers, coaches, bosses or supervisors, or other adults who lead things you are involved in because you need to make changes or need help catching up with your normal responsibilities. People in your life may need to know different things depending on their role and what you need from them.

How much do you want to share? This answer is likely to vary a lot depending on who you are telling about your person's death, and on your own personality and comfort level. It's okay to give details if you want to, and it's also okay to give a short explanation of what happened. You don't owe anyone your story, and you don't have to hide what happened or how you feel about it. Especially if the way your person died was complicated, this may be a question you want to sort out with someone you trust. It's your choice who you talk to and how much you say, but as you go back to your regular routines, you will probably want or feel the need to say something about why you've been gone, your mental and emotional capacity right now, and what you need or how others could help.

.....> What you could do:

- **Create basic scripts:** Sometimes it's hard to think of the right words in the moment, and it's easier to think through what you plan to say before you get into the situation. Consider making a few plans, such as what to say to acquaintances if they ask how you are doing, what to say to people you know well, and what to say to people who can help you plan or manage responsibilities, like teachers or coaches. You can journal or talk through this on your own, or ask for help from a family member or trusted adult.

- **Listen to how others share the news:** You've likely heard your parents or caregivers, or other people in your life tell people that your person has died. Maybe you've also had people tell you about deaths of people in their lives, or heard them inform others. What did you think about what you heard? Are there any phrases or ways of explaining things that feel good to you, or anything you don't want to say?
- **Find someone you can talk to without a filter:** It's challenging and tiring to think through everything you're saying, especially in conversations that used to be easy or casual. While it's absolutely okay not to tell everyone in your life all of the details, it's important to have one or a few people that you don't have to think so hard around. Whether that's a friend, mentor, counselor, or support group, find someone who can make space for you to say things without worrying about how they come out.

.....➤ Where you could look for more information:

- ✕ **Passages where people share their grief and others join them:** Genesis 33, 37, 45, 46, 50 • Numbers 20 • Deuteronomy 34 • Judges 11 • 2 Samuel 1 • Jeremiah 31 • Ezekiel 9 • Job 2 • Luke 7 • John 11 • Acts 20 • Revelation 5
- ✕ **Poems where grief is shared with a community:** Leviticus 10 • Numbers 14 • Judges 5 • Jeremiah 8 and 9 • Joel 1 and 2 • Amos 5 • Job 16 • Psalm 6, 22, 38, 42, 77 • Ecclesiastes 4 • Lamentations 1 • Zechariah 12 • Revelation 18
- ✕ **Passages with benefits of sharing:** Deuteronomy 28 • Isaiah 15 • Jeremiah 13 and 14 • Matthew 5 • Ephesians 4 • 1 Thessalonians 4
- ✕ **Passages encouraging a sharing of grief with others:** Exodus 32 • Judges 9 • Isaiah 1 and 40 • Micah 1 • Matthew 11 • Romans 12 • 1 Corinthians 12 • Galatians 6 • Hebrews 10 • James 5