



## Back-to-School and Grief Triggers for Parents & Caregivers

*Many of the routines and rituals of returning to school after summer break create grief triggers for students grieving the death of a family member.*

### Back-to-school routines that can become grief triggers:

- Checking “deceased” on enrollment cards
- Watching other children being walked to their rooms by a mom or dad when theirs is missing
- Questions about family & family activities during the summer
- Being asked to tell/write about fun summer activities (their summer may have been full of sadness)
- Forms & letters addressed to Mom & Dad
- Requests/requirements for parents to sign a syllabus or checklist
- Back-to-school shopping (without a now deceased parent)

*Additionally, children struggle with morning & evening routines at home which are different now that a parent is gone.*

### What can parents, caregivers & friends do to help?

- Talk to your child’s teachers, counselors, and principal about these concerns. See the Lost & Found Grief Center website for teacher/counselor resources.
- Be aware of these triggers and provide additional support & understanding.
- Talk to your children prior to school starting about the things that will be different and might be upsetting. Assure them you will help them through these events.
- Plan for changes in routines and discuss the changes with the children, allowing time to adjust to new routines.
- Let children know their response is normal. Praise them for the strength and courage it takes to face life’s changes.
- Let them know you are still a family and give them ideas of others in their life who are there to support them.
- Let your child know you understand things are different and difficult, and invite him to talk to you about struggles whenever needed.
- Check in with your child’s teachers and counselors to see how he is are adjusting after a month or two.
- Establish a communication plan with parents/caregivers (see also "Going Back to School Routines).

