

Supporting those grieving an overdose loss

Providing support for youth and young adults in the wake of losing a person to opioids is vital, and it may not look the same as other kinds of grief or healing. Taking action and offering resources can help mitigate immediate and long-term effects.

Helping youth and young adults after they lose a loved one can feel complicated, daunting, and stressful. When that loss is intertwined with the trauma of addiction and the complexity of watching a friend or peer experience it, providing support can be difficult to navigate.

How education can help

Provide extra teaching support for all students immediately through tutoring, extended deadlines and office hours with teachers. Waiting until grief manifests in their schoolwork can only compound the stress of students.

As a teacher, explain what substance use disorder is and how it can be prevented.

Let students ask questions about substance use, what it means and why people experience substance use disorder.

Encourage adults to talk with the kids about opioid overdose. Adults can educate youth about how to respond to an overdose with the use of Naloxone. Whether it is a loved one or coming to the aid of a stranger everyone can save a life. Talking through an action plan can help adults and youth feel safe, empowered and prepared.

For more information, please visit the following websites:

For resources on prevention services and to get involved with a local prevention coalition, please visit The Athena Forum (TheAthenaForum.org)

For information on opioid prevention messaging and resources to educate loved ones, visit Starts with One (GetTheFactsRX.com/conversation-starters)

To learn about the risks of underaged use of alcohol, marijuana and other drugs, and how to help your children make healthy choices, visit StartTalkingNow.org

To help communities respond to overdose, visit StopOverdose.org

For anonymous and confidential emotional support that can connect callers with local treatment resources or community services, visit Washington Recovery Helpline (WaRecoveryHelpline.org)



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How to show you are available

Set reminders for student support teams, counselors, and peer groups to check in.

Youth will carry this loss with them in one way or another for the rest of their lives.

Continue providing support beyond the initial weeks and months. Simple check-ins will help build a trusting relationship that the youth may need for the long term.

Anticipate triggers like anniversaries, birthdays and special moments in the youth's life where they will feel especially burdened by loss. If someone else in the community dies as a result of an overdose, think of how that could retraumatize a youth who's already experienced a similar loss.

Give students the opportunity to remember the person they've lost. Having a space to share memories, celebrate their life or carry something with them can teach them that this person won't be forgotten.

For more information, please visit: www.TheAthenaForum.org



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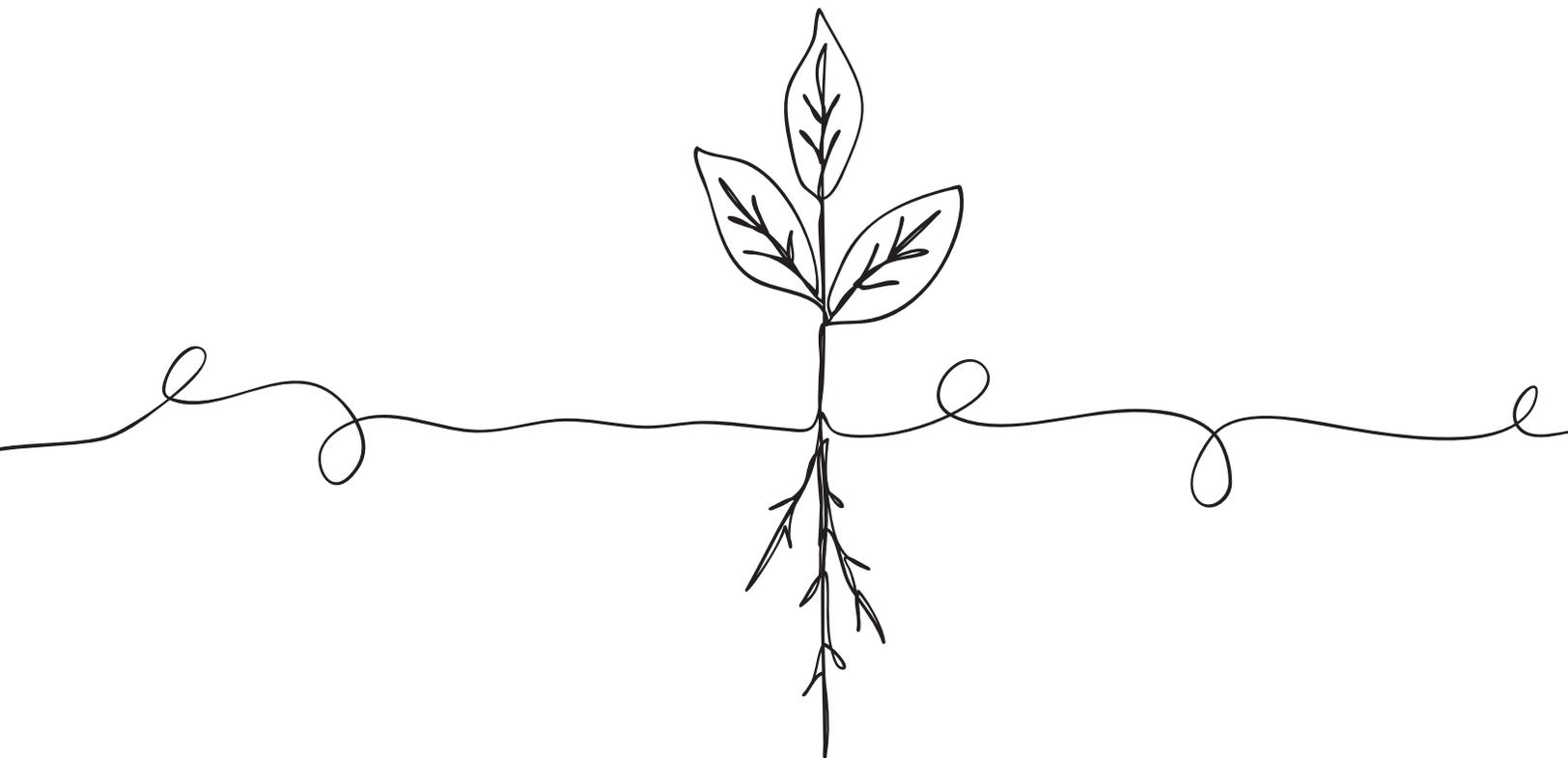
Take care of yourself

You are the biggest influence on your child. It is important to model and normalize seeking support from others including professionals.

Adults may need support themselves. Adults can reach out to local programs that provide support, resources, and assistance. These can often be found by contacting your local school, provider, community center, faith-based organizations, or grief groups.

Stay connected. Checking in with people who are close to you is a great way to stay connected. Talking through the things that weigh on you – no matter how big or small – can brighten someone's day.

For more information, please visit: [Washington Recovery helpline \(WaRecoveryHelpline.org\)](https://www.warecoveryhelpline.org)



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Ways to show sensitivity

Don't avoid the subject. Responding to the loss as though it's taboo will reinforce the idea that the youth should feel ashamed or embarrassed by the loss.

Show your own emotions when talking to students and community members. Youth often follow the example set by the adults they trust. Expressing grief will help them see that their feelings are a natural part of the process.

Let the students set boundaries with their teachers and parents. If they don't want to share the details of their loss, don't pry. Try and point them toward places they may feel more comfortable sharing, like with counselors, friends and in support groups.

For more information, please visit: [StartTalkingNow.org](https://www.starttalkingnow.org)

