

Suggestions for Students Attending a Visitation or a Funeral

Keep in mind:

- Expect to feel nervous when going to a funeral home or a funeral
- Go with a friend or ask a parent to accompany you
- If this is the first time you've seen the parents, simply offer your condolences; just say, "I am so sorry about ___'s death" (this may open a conversation)
- Point out something special to you about the deceased
- If the visitation or funeral is open casket, view the body if you want; you do not have to

Later Involvement:

- After the funeral you may choose to continue to visit the parents; they may continue to want to see the friends of their deceased child
- Continue to talk about their deceased child from time to time

When Visiting Grieving Parents

This information should be helpful to students when interacting with the parents of a deceased friend. **Always respect the wishes of grieving parents.** These suggestions must fit the parents' needs and requests, as well as the student's own comfort level.

First Steps:

- In the vast majority of cases the parents find it comforting to see friends of their deceased child
- If you were a close friend of the deceased and you know the parents, then go visit them at their home
- If you were a friend but had not met the parents (yet they know who you are), you might still visit the home
- Other friends might wait until the visitation or funeral
- Send the parents a note or card

Communication:

- When you visit, do not worry about what to say; your presence is all that is needed; if you wish to take a flower or anything meaningful, that's all right too
- Don't be afraid you will upset the parents by asking or talking about the deceased; they are already upset
- Just sitting with the parents will most likely fill the silence
- Listen, no matter what the topic
- If you were a really close friend, the parents might be pleased for you to visit the deceased friend's room (if you are comfortable doing so)
- You might ask what you can do for them; ask other relatives what you might do to help
- Do not try to take away the grieving parent's pain
- Talk about the deceased person (grieving people often like telling stories about the deceased, "do you remember the time...")
- Offer suggestions only when advice is asked