Supporting youth grieving a violent death

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Homicide Grief
Supporting youth grieving a violent death

Pointers:
- Reassure youth that it isn't their fault & they are not alone.
- Tell the truth using simple terms, "Someone hurt ___ and they died. It can be difficult to understand why someone would cause harm like this. What questions are coming up for you?"
- Reestablish youth safety & create a list of safe people & places.
- Embrace feelings without judgment (anger, guilt, shame, etc.).
- Recognize potential for trauma response or prolonged grief.
- Consider peer support groups & grief camps, such as Camp Erin.
- Welcome questions & LISTEN! LISTEN! LISTEN!

Things to avoid:
- Empty reassurances, such as "All things happen for a reason" or "It is going to be OK".
- Rushing the grief process or trying to fix it - It is ok to not be ok.
- Telling someone how to feel or cope, such as "Be strong" or "At least...."
- Assuming all homicide grief is the same - let youth share their experiences.
- Exposure to graphic content via media & adult conversations.
- Imposing viewpoints, placing blame or trying to make sense of the death.