Supporting youth grieving a death by overdose
Overdose Grief

Supporting youth grieving a death by overdose or substance use disorder

Pointers:
- Reassure youth that it isn't their fault & they are not alone
- Use person-first language that recognizes addiction as a disease & public health issue: "_____ was struggling with a substance use disorder"
- Embrace feelings without judgment (guilt, relief, anger, etc.)
- Build a support network of trusted adults within the community
- Model & encourage healthy activities (art, music, clubs, etc.)
- Consider peer support groups & camps: Camp Erin/Camp Mariposa
- Provide prevention support by talking about risks, setting clear expectations, staying engaged, & intervening early
- 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
- Ignoring the complexity of a relationship with someone who has struggled with substance use disorder & the mixed / conflicting emotions following their death
- Language that produces judgment, such as "addict" or "drug abuser"