



## Simple Steps to Listen to Students

# Open ears

- Open with how you're feeling**
- Patiently wait for their response**
- Establish a tone of trust and safety**
- Note that grief is emotional, not intellectual**

- Each reaction is normal and natural**
- Avoid phrases that discourage painful feelings**
- Remember, listen with your heart, not your head**
- Summarise by acknowledging their feelings**

1. Start by telling the truth about how you've been feeling, for example 'I was worried about how all of the children in my class were doing while school was closed'. This will enable your student to share their true feelings with you.
2. Do tell them that you can't imagine how they must be feeling right now about their situation.
3. Recognise that what they're feeling is emotional, not intellectual. Feeling sad and scared are normal and natural responses.
4. Remember that everyone is unique and there is no right or wrong way to feel. Allow them to share their emotions without judgment, criticism or interruption. It may take a while for children to share their feelings. Don't give up!
5. Listen with your heart, not your head. They don't need fixing; they just need to be heard.
6. Be Patient. Give them time to form their own opinions.
7. Don't say "Don't feel sad." Sadness is a healthy and normal reaction to the loss of their lives as they know it.
8. You don't need to be strong. It gives them the message that they must be strong too, which means they will hide their normal and natural feelings.
9. Don't compare their lives or situations to others in the world. Comparison minimises their feelings. All grief is felt at 100%, although the intensity of the grief is different, for example the loss of going to the end of year disco will be felt very differently to the loss of a grandparent.
10. Acknowledge their feelings without trying to fix them, this will leave the door open for them to trust you to hear their feelings again.



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