



## US Class Dean Update

Dear Senior Families,

I'm writing briefly to let you know that we gathered the seniors this morning to share the very sad news that one of their classmates lost a parent quite suddenly last week. The purpose of our meeting was to offer students resources for supporting a friend who is grieving, and for coping with their own emotional responses to an unexpected loss. As Dr. Deirdre O'Malley explained, sometimes when someone close to us suffers a loss, it can bring up unexpected feelings about our own experiences with grief. The kids know what counseling resources are available to them here on campus, and I hope that you will also reach out to me if you notice your child struggling to process this news.

It bears mentioning that this is always a time of vulnerability and heightened emotions for seniors. Many of them are getting information that - one way or the other - helps them to sharpen their focus on what they imagine their lives may look like next year: Where will they be? Who will be there with them? What does it mean to leave home and begin their lives as independent adults? They may carry a lot of anxiety as they wonder whether they will be successful, known, accepted, and safe.

A heartbreaking loss within our own community, compounded by the horrific news of violence targeting young people at Brown University and the Jewish community at Bondi Beach in Australia, can certainly complicate our kids' already complicated feelings about beginning to separate themselves from their longstanding communities of comfort and care. It would be understandable if they didn't quite know what to make of their own feelings during this time that is potentially full of both sadness and joy.

I've asked the students to hold each other with special care this week, and you will be unsurprised to know that they have already responded to one another with great empathy and compassion. I'm including a copy of Dr. O'Malley's talking points below. Please don't

hesitate to reach out to me (or any member of our student support team) if you have any concerns.

I'll write again later this week with holiday wishes. Until then,

Emily

**Dr. O'Malley's Remarks on Supporting a Friend Who is Grieving**

*When your friend is grieving, it can feel incredibly heavy and confusing. You might really want to help them and at the same time feel unsure of what to say or afraid of saying the wrong thing.*

*The most important thing to know is this: you don't have to fix anything. Grief isn't a problem to be solved. What your friend or classmate needs most is to know they're not alone.*

*Sometimes the simplest things matter the most. Saying, "I'm really sorry this happened," or "I'm here for you," is enough. You don't need the perfect words. Being present - sitting with them, walking with them, listening when they want to talk - can mean more than any advice. Small acts of kindness matter too. Checking in with a text, inviting them to hang out (even if they say no), treating them like themselves, can all help them feel supported and connected.*

*Grief is personal to everyone, and it doesn't follow a schedule. One day someone might seem okay, and the next day they might be angry, sad, quiet, or distracted. All of that is normal.*

*Showing patience and understanding and continuing to just be there goes a long way.*

*Sometimes when someone around us experiences a loss, it can bring up unexpected feelings about our own experiences of grief. That is also very normal. It can be good to talk things out if that happens to you. Anyone here is invited to process this with me, with Mr. Sarfati or one of the other counselors here at D-E.*

*Being there for someone during one of the hardest moments of their life is a powerful thing. I know your class is going to be a huge support for Sonia and we are here to help you in any way you need.*

