



Supporting the Grieving Person

When someone you care for has experienced a loss, it impacts on you as well. Seeing someone you love in emotional pain is upsetting and it is human nature for you to want to “make it better.” Below are some suggestions that may assist you in supporting the grieving person you care for. “Being there” is an eloquent statement that you care.

- Visit the grieving person as soon as possible.
- If the person cannot be seen immediately, phone regularly and keep in touch. Reach out to the bereaved. Make concrete offers of assistance.
- Clichés are not helpful. Instead of telling them how they should feel, let them tell you the emotions they are experiencing.
- Help the bereaved person to express his/her feelings and emotions. Accept them and don't be judgmental. Give the griever permission to grieve.
- Not everyone reacts to a situation in exactly the same way. Be sensitive to their needs.
- Don't overwhelm. Remember that you cannot take away the pain from the bereaved person. Over compensating with your actions and deeds is not beneficial to the healing process. Just as you need to accept the expression of emotions, you must also accept the silence.
- Physical contact, holding hands or hugging is an immediate need for a bereaved person even before any words are spoken. Try not to let your own sense of helplessness keep you from reaching out to the griever.
- Expect to see the full range of emotional responses from one who is experiencing grief. It's okay to cry with the survivor. It's okay to laugh with the bereaved when he/she needs to laugh, with the enjoyment of recounting humorous times had with the loved one.
- Acknowledge the death in conversation. This gives value to the person's thoughts and feelings. Replay is extremely important in a healthy grief recovery.
- Send a personal letter with some of your own personal remembrances.
- Making a contribution to a charity is a most fitting memorial to the one who died.

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- This can be a critical time for examining one's faith and the meaning of human life. Become aware of what your own thoughts and feelings are towards grief. Encourage faith issues and discussions.
- Don't encourage the use of drugs and alcohol for the grief stricken person. This only delays and covers up the grief emotions.
- Remember holidays, birthdays and anniversaries with a call or visit. Explore the use of rituals. Find out what is meaningful for them.
- Do not allow the griever to remain isolated. Find out who the griever's support system is. Do they have support? Are they aware of formal support services in the community? Inform the bereaved about specialized support groups and counseling sources where people discuss their problems and ways to manage their grief.
- Continue to call and visit. Demonstrate that you care and that you have not forgotten the survivor.
- Encourage the bereaved person to keep a journal or diary as a record of all thoughts and feelings. Offer literature on death, dying and grief issues to read, visit the cemetery or mausoleum, place a memorial ad in the newspaper.
- Maintain hope for the future.
- Be patient with the griever...and yourself. Let your genuine concern and caring guide you.

Grief Statements That May Not Be Helpful

- "We understand how you feel."
- "Be thankful you have another son."
- "It's God's will..."
- "It's over now, let's put it behind us."
- "The living must go on."
- "Get it together now."
- "Time for you to snap out of it."
- "He's been gone for 4 months now...time you got on with your life."
- "All things must pass."
- "She lead a full life."

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- “You’ll find someone else.”
- “You must be strong.”
- “You need to push past the pain...time to move on.”
- “You can have other children.”

“Compassionate friends know the art of listening with their ears and hearts.”

haiku by Diantha Ain

When someone you care for has experienced a loss, it impacts on you as well. Seeing someone you love in emotional pain is upsetting and it is human nature for you to want to “make it better.”

In our uneasiness with death and witnessing pain of any kind, we often try to soothe with “words of wisdom.” Many people are not comfortable with silence and feel a need to fill the quietness with words. It is at times like this, that the spoken word, although said with good intentions, can be less beneficial than just your physical presence.

Often a sincere hug or a touch on the hand will speak volumes. There is no “right response.”

Be sincere, be respectful, be yourself, JUST BE THERE.

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