



Helping Someone Who Is Grieving

“Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light.”—Helen Keller

- Your presence is more important than anything you say. Don't assume you know how they feel or what you can say to make it better. A hug and “I'm sorry” is usually enough.
- Expect a wide range of emotions, including a sense of unreality in early grief. There is no right or wrong way to feel, whether it is guilt, regret, relief, anger, sadness, or fear.
- Listen attentively. At first, their talk may be mostly about the death. Later, they may talk more about their loved one's life. Listen, even if they repeat their stories over and over.
- Make specific and practical offers to help, such as, “Let me pick-up some groceries for you when I'm at the store,” rather than, “if there's anything you need, give me a call.”
- Don't try to lessen the loss with easy answers—“It's God's will,” “They're better off now,” “God needed a little angel in heaven,” or “There must be a reason.”
- Remember there is no timetable for grief, so keep support ongoing. Also, don't rush them to put away their loved one's belongings. They will when they're ready; then offer to help.
- Share your positive memories of the deceased. It helps the bereaved relive past experiences and feel connected to their loved one.
- Let the bereaved know what you appreciate about them. Build them up and include them in your life and activities. Self-esteem and a sense of identity suffer after a major loss.
- Remember special days--holidays, birthdays, anniversaries. Mark them on your calendar. These are likely to be difficult times for someone who is grieving.
- Encourage professional help if you see any of the following warning signs: thoughts of self-destruction, mounting anxiety, depression, or abuse of drugs and alcohol.

