



Often is it difficult to be the one who is in the position of reaching out to a person who is experiencing grief. There are things that you can do to help that are both practical and emotionally supportive. Here are some suggestions that you may find helpful.

What's Important Here?

The initial period of grief can seem unbearable and impossible to navigate. It may take years to integrate into one's life story the grief experience and the loss of a loved one.

- ~Continued support from friends and family is essential.
- ~Allowing choices over their everyday lives can be empowering.
- ~Remembering to acknowledge and validate the loss and what it represents will be comforting to the grieving person(s).
- ~Being a good listener –even when the story is repeated multiple times –shows that you care.
- ~Helping to find appropriate resources will relieve stress when the grief stricken are making decisions and looking for help in the immediate aftermath.

Being thoughtful and helpful with the above suggestions, without being intrusive, can help bring back confidence and the ability to cope.

What does grief look like?

When someone you love has died, circumstances and life patterns are forever altered. Living without that person can feel isolating and alienating when considering the time previously

spent with friends and family. It may feel too overwhelming to engage in some of the same activities that were enjoyed before the loved one died. The grieving person may exhibit a range of very normal behaviors such as:

- ~Restlessness, pacing around.
- ~Loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyed.
- ~Loss of interest in physical appearance.
- ~Dreams and intrusive thoughts of the one who is lost.
- ~Inability to concentrate and memory issues.
- ~Loss of appetite or overeating, fatigue and sleeplessness.

How does grief feel?

Those who are grieving can have many emotions and reactions to grief and the loss of a loved one. Feelings are natural and need to be felt, expressed, acknowledged and understood. There is no timetable or right or wrong way to grieve. The expressions of grief may last from six months to two years or ever longer. You may see the following symptoms of grief:

- ~Immediate shock and feelings of being numb and emotionless.
- ~denial and rejection of the loss.
- ~Wishing they could die in order to be with the loved one again (This is normal; making a suicide plan is not normal. Intervention is essential.)

~Blaming themselves or others, feeling guilt.

- ~Uncontrollable crying, shaking, shortness of breath.
- ~Anger, guilt, hopelessness, anxiety.
- ~Feelings of being a burden to others.

How can I help?

It is common to feel awkward when trying to comfort someone who is grieving. Many people don't know what to do or say. Be honest. Remember that your presence and just "being there" is the most important thing.

- ~Listen by letting them tell their "story".
- ~Avoid clichés such as "you'll get through this" or "you will heal over time".
- ~Just show up and take care of some daily tasks like meals, mowing the lawn, taking the children or running errands.
- ~Allow them to cry.
- ~Continue to be there, even after three or four months. Sometimes it takes that long for the reality of the loss to be accepted.

Children

Children may feel confused and at a loss when trying to express their feelings about death. They feel the pain and sorrow just as an adult does but may have less of an understanding of the circumstances and how to cope with them.

Things to do for a child

~Tell the child as soon as possible about the death, using language with which the child is familiar.

~Use the word “dead” or “died” and avoid phrases like “passed away”.

~ Children will have questions that must be answered.

~Children may need to be encouraged to allow their feelings to show. Allow them to cry or be angry.

~Assure the child that he or she did nothing wrong that “caused” the death.

~Ask if they want to participate in the funeral –or even attend – or view the body of their loved one.

~And remember that it is okay to *not* have all the answers.

Handling special occasions

Birthdays, holidays and other special occasions come and go; the anniversary of the death will be among those dates. It may be a very difficult time, especially the first year. During this time they may feel the grief more intensely, or they may feel guilty for celebrating a holiday because their loved one is not there. They may have guilty feelings about “going on with life” without their loved one. There are things you can do to help:

~Encourage interactions with others.

~Talk to them about moving forward and how they have planned for that.

~Reassure them that it is okay to smile, to be happy, and to move forward. They are not deserting their loved one.

~Remind them that the memories will always be there.

~Listen to their apprehensions about the holidays.

~Help them plan for the holidays so that when those days arrive, the grieving person is as prepared as he or she can be.

Communicating without words

There are ways we can convey our support and understanding without using our words.

Some thoughts from www.characterfirst.com :

~*Compassion*: Investing whatever is necessary to heal the hurts of others.

~*Availability*: Making my schedule and priorities secondary to the wishes of those I serve.

~*Gentleness*: Showing Consideration and personal concern for others.

~*Patience*: Accepting a difficult situation without a deadline to remove it.

~*Sincerity*: Eagerly doing what is right with transparent motives.

Adopted from Boulder County Sheriff's Office
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A LOVED ONE IS GRIEVING



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