

OFFERING SUPPORT AFTER A DEATH

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

It can be very difficult to know what to say or what to do to help someone who is grieving. Death can be an uncomfortable subject that brings up distressing emotions. Our own feelings of discomfort can get in the way of offering what the grieving person needs. The following suggestions may help you as you offer support and comfort to those around you who are grieving.

- › Allow them to cry, talk, yell, or laugh. What you say is less important than just being available. Don't be afraid to show your own grief over their loss.
- › Don't try to stop or take away their pain. It is normal and healthy for them to feel and express their pain.
- › Be ready to listen. This can be the best way to offer support. They may talk about the same things over and over as they work through feelings. Don't be afraid of silence. Let them fill in the words when they're ready.
- › Recognize that they may have many different emotions, often in the same day. Don't take difficult emotions personally.
- › It's okay to talk about the deceased person and share stories about them. However, it's a good idea to ask first. People who are grieving will have times when talking about their loved one is a source of joy. At other times, this may not be something they can emotionally tolerate.
- › Do something in remembrance of the deceased (make a donation to a cause, plant a tree, etc.). This can help you feel that you have done something positive. It also helps the person mourning by giving them a sense that their loved one's memory lives on.
- › While it is important to be aware of the many emotions a grieving person may be dealing with, don't treat them as if they are frail. Include them as you normally would; it's okay if they decline your offers.
- › Don't expect or encourage them to "get back to normal." That doesn't exist. They will be working to create a "new" normal for themselves. This takes a long time.
- › If you aren't sure what they need, ask.
- › Keep checking in after the initial outpouring of support wanes. Grief doesn't go away on a timetable.

What to avoid saying:

"At least he lived a long life."
"I know just how you feel."
"She is in a better place."
"It was his time."
"Be strong."

What you might say:

"I am sorry for your loss."
"I'm not sure what to say, but please know I care".
"My favorite memory is..."
"I can't know how you feel, but I am here to help in whatever way I can."

Together, all the way.®



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