

Help with Grieving

Tips to help those who are grieving:

- Never force a person to talk about their feelings
- Do not be afraid to mention the person who has died
 - It is common for people to avoid mentioning the person who died. They either fear it will remind the grieving person of the loss, or because they feel uncomfortable and don't know what to do. However, acting as if the person is not in pain can make him/her feel isolated. When speaking to the person who is grieving, and you can say the name of the deceased, this can make that person feel less alone.
- Listen to the grieving
 - If a person wants to talk about his or her loss, sometimes the best thing you can do is lend an ear. The person may repeat the same stories or difficulties many times. When this happens, perhaps the most important thing you can do is listen, and give minimal feedback. You may feel like you are not helping because you are not "doing" anything, but you are doing a great deal by staying with the person and not being judgmental.
- Make sure the person speaks with a mental health professional if s/he exhibits suicidal ideation
- Encourage the person to make wise choices
 - If a person appears to be making rash major life choices during a grieving period, you can urge the person to take his or her time. Let the person know that it is OK to take time to make major choices. By gently talking with the person through a few scenarios, it may become apparent that a major life choice at the moment is probably unwise.
- Remember that grieving is a long process
 - The person may be grieving for a significant amount of time. Depending upon the individual, it may take months before the most painful grieving begins. This can leave a person feeling very lonely, as most people are most sympathetic immediately after a death. They are less likely to offer support on a regular basis down the road, even though this is when the grieving person may need it the most.
- Offer your companionship
 - Sometimes a grieving person simply does not want to be alone. The presence of another person in the room can be comforting.
- Do not say "I know how you feel"
 - You may have experienced significant loss in your personal life. However, each loss is different from each person. The truth is that it is impossible for you to know how another person feels. More accurate expressions of sympathy are less likely to minimize the person's loss. You can use similar sentiments such as "This must be extremely difficult for you" or "I know how difficult it was for me when my loved one died." This way, you express your sympathy, without dismissing the uniqueness of the individual's experience.
- Do not discourage feelings
 - Being in the presence of someone expressing intense emotions can be uncomfortable. When you say things such as "I know you can be strong" or "Don't cry", you let the grieving person know that you are not comfortable. This can make him or her feel more alone, and even reinforce a fear that they will not be able to cope with the overwhelming situation. Encouraging the expression of feelings by letting the person know s/he does not have to be strong, or that it is OK to cry allows the person the freedom to grieve as he or she wishes.
- Be cautious when offering advice
 - If a grieving person is not getting out much or avoids talking about the death, it can be tempting to suggest to the person that these are not healthy behaviors. This is when you need to be careful to not suggest that a person "should" or "shouldn't" do something. The truth of the matter is, that only the person knows what he or she "should" or "shouldn't" do. Telling people that they have to do something, often results in them doing the opposite. The best advice you can give to a grieving person is that it is OK for him or her to deal with the loss any way she wants to.

