

## *Supporting Yourself and Others in Grief*

Persons who have suffered a loss require the support and understanding of everyone in their lives. The quality of support that a grieving person receives can greatly help or hinder their healing process. Everyone wants to help a loved one who is in pain, but many people have no clue as to what is the right thing to do or say. As a result, people often offer well-meaning comments that insult or offend their bereaved friends. Following are a few guidelines on how you can support someone who is grieving:

- Just be there. Listen patiently and without judgment or interruption. It really does help them to tell their stories over and over again.
- Avoid easy answers. The best thing to say may be as simple as “I’m sorry,” or “you’re in my thoughts and prayers.” Comments like “only the good die young” or “God must have needed another angel in Heaven” only serve to offend your friend and invalidate their grief.
- Be proactive. People who are deeply grieving often cannot identify what they need, let alone ask for help. Offer specific help, and if it is declined don’t give up—try again later.
- Let them grieve their way. People have very different grieving styles, and there is no one correct way to grieve.
- Help them locate the assistance they need within the community.
- Become comfortable with tears. When you tell a grieving person “please don’t cry,” ask yourself whether you are taking care of them or whether you just feel uncomfortable with their tears. Tears can be very healing. Don’t be afraid to let them see that you are grieving too.
- Speak openly and honestly. Don’t speak to your friend in platitudes.
- Understand the grief process. Learning about how grief is resolved can help you support your friend. Healing from a loss is not a linear process that gets progressively better and better, but rather a series of ups and downs like a roller coaster. This is considered normal.
- Allow them to grieve at their own pace. Grief recovery takes as long as it takes. Do not impose your own time limits on your friend (or yourself). Never say, “Aren’t you over that yet?”
- Show your support by agreeing to take part in healing rituals or memorials.
- Don’t try to “fix” the griever. Allow them to heal in their own way and in their own time.
- Do not pressure your friend (or yourself) to make major decisions unless absolutely necessary.
- Understand that anger and guilt are normal in grief. Encourage your friend to express their anger and feelings of regret.
- Be understanding when your friend’s (or your) behavior seems rude or thoughtless.
- Consult [resources](#) on supporting yourself and others in grief.