

Helping Others Cope with Grief

Watching those around us suffer a significant loss can leave us feeling helpless and frustrated. Knowing that a friend or colleague is faced with a loss of enormous magnitude, what can we possibly say or do to provide comfort? Listed below are some tips for assisting someone through the grieving process.

Conventional expressions of sympathy are best

"I am so sorry," "I hope you know how much I care and that you can call on me for anything," "I want you to know that my thoughts are with you." These statements are not original or elaborate, but they are appropriate and effective. Keeping expressions of sympathy simple and sincere is the best way to communicate your concern.

Avoid trying to cheer up the bereaved

There is no way to remove the suffering of a grieving individual, so don't try to. Above all, don't try to cheer the person up with statements like, "Perhaps, it's for the best," "It must have been God's will," "At least s/he didn't linger," or "Time heals all wounds." No matter how well-intentioned, statements such as these are insensitive and potentially hurtful.

Be there to listen

Above all else, those who are suffering from a loss may need someone to listen. Make yourself available and, if they seem inclined, encourage them to talk about their feelings. Avoid, however, pressuring someone to talk if they don't want to. Be respectful of their feelings and follow their lead.

Offer a helping hand

During the initial stages of grief, it may be hard for a person to attend to the everyday responsibilities of life. Offering assistance with these things, such as grocery shopping, mowing the lawn, or preparing a home-cooked meal are wonderful ways to show your support.

Recognize your limitations

It is important to recognize what you can and cannot do for those around you. Although there are many ways that you can help people through the grieving process, recovery will ultimately depend upon their own willingness and ability to deal with their emotions.

Have patience

The grief process is different for everyone, and it is very common for people to "revisit" earlier stages along the way. People do not progress through the stages of grief in a predictable, linear way, or in a specific timeframe. You can help those around you by continuing to show your support, even months and years following the loss.

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For Further Assistance contact FASAP: 443-997-7000