

Dos and Don'ts for supporting someone who is grieving

Care for the Family

Do...

✓ Talk about the person who has died. Many grieving people appreciate hearing memories and stories about their loved one.

✓ Offer practical support. Someone who is grieving may struggle to cope with everyday routines, so providing meals, helping with household tasks, or offering practical assistance can be invaluable.

✓ Show sensitivity. Consider calling before visiting. While company may sometimes be welcomed, there may also be times when they need space and feel unable to see people.

✓ Remember that appearances can be deceptive. Even if they seem to be coping well on the outside, they may be struggling.

Don't...

✕ Do not expect them to be 'over it'. They won't ever get over it, but they will find a 'new normal' over time.

✕ Do not ignore the loss or avoid asking questions about the person who has died.

✕ Do not offer help and then disappear. Don't phone and just say 'let me know if I can help.' Specific, practical help is always welcome.

✕ Do not dismiss or challenge their beliefs. If you have a faith, you don't need to be super-spiritual and feel you have to defend God's case.

It's better to be present without knowing what to say than to stay away because you do not have the answers.

Do...

✓ Be prepared to listen without judgement. They are likely to be feeling a jumble of emotions and letting them express themselves can be really helpful.

✓ Encourage self-compassion. Remind them to be kind to themselves and not to push to meet other people's expectations of how they 'should' be.

✓ Remember that grief has no timetable. It will go on long after people expect, be willing to walk that road with them.

✓ Continue inviting them to events and social gatherings. But understand if they are unable to go or have to leave early.

✓ Talk about everyday things. They still matter, and the grieving person is likely still interested, though small talk may feel very trivial.

Don't...

✗ Do not say you have been too busy to get in touch. It's better to admit that you don't know what to say or how to support them.

✗ Do not try to provide answers. It is unlikely that you will have an answer that will satisfy the person who is grieving.

✗ Do not compare their grief with your own experiences or expectations. Grief is unique to the person experiencing it.

✗ Do not explain away the death with clichés or platitudes. Avoid using the phrase, 'at least' as it can diminish their pain and loss.

For more information on bereavement support, please visit

cff.org.uk/bereavement

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