

# Ways to Support A Griever



Someone close to you has experienced the death of a loved one. You are probably wondering what you can do. There are a variety of simple, practical acts of kindness that can make a world of difference to the griever.

## In the early days

Your friend has so much to do at a time when they have the least ability to make decisions and accomplish tasks. You can show your support and how much you care through your words and deeds.

## Offer condolences

- Use phrases such as: “I am sorry to hear of the death of [person’s name]” or “I can’t imagine what you are going through, but I am here to listen”
- Show empathy and compassion (rather than pity) through your eye contact and body language
- Ask permission and give a hug if appropriate
- Allow for silence; much sentiment can be conveyed without conversation

## Attend the funeral or memorial service, or offer to be at the house to help coordinate or host the reception afterward.

## Make a meal and deliver it

- Before you do the cooking, be sure to ask if there are any dietary restrictions or preferences
- Give your friend the choice as to whether they want you to come in for a visit or have you leave the meal at the doorstep

## Offer to help with daily chores or errands

- When you are going to the market, ask if it would be OK for you to pick up fruit, bread, eggs, or other items they may need. Add a roll of postage stamps or a magazine as a little something extra
- Bring a bag of cleaning supplies and rubber gloves to the house...and offer to do the dishes or help in the garden
- Offer to have your handyman come over to do a few household repairs
- Take their children to an after-school activity or for a walk or to the park

## As time goes on

Those who are bereaved are often far too soon left to grieve alone either because well-meaning people simply don’t know what to say or do or because the griever themselves worries that they are burdening their friends by talking too much about their grief.

Grievers keenly feel the pressure to say that they are doing fine, even when they are not. They probably will need your support more as time goes on and others have gone back to their own lives. And although they need your help, they probably feel hesitant to ask. You can continue to show you’re caring through thoughtful gestures.

## Stay in touch by phone, text message, email etc.

- Grievers don't have the presence of mind to reach out and call to ask for a favor; check in with them on a regular basis to let them know you care
- Even a short message "I'm thinking of you" can brighten the day of a griever and help them feel remembered
- Consider putting a reminder on your calendar to call them on the monthly anniversary of the death or other important dates

## Find a time that is convenient for them to have you stop in for a visit

- Offer to do a load of laundry or fold the clothes while you are visiting
- Make yourself available to sit with them quietly while they pay their bills, write thank you notes, or read a book

## Invite meaningful conversation

- Use the name of the person who died and incorporate them into normal conversation
- Reminisce about times you spent together with the person who died, or what you remember your friend telling you about the person
- Tell a humorous story that makes them smile
- Remember that grievors often fear that the person who died will be forgotten; let them know that YOU have not forgotten

© OUR HOUSE Grief Support Center - [www.ourhouse-grief.org](http://www.ourhouse-grief.org)

## How to talk with the Bereaved

Someone who you care about has lost someone that they love. You want to be supportive but it is hard to find the right words. This can lead to saying nothing which is often more painful than anything.

Focus on the showing love not wisdom

Say "I can't imagine how you are feeling. I am here to listen" instead of "I know how you feel"

Say "It is okay to feel what you are feeling" instead of "They wouldn't want you to be sad"

Say "I am here to listen for as long as you need" instead of "You need to move on"

Say "What is your loved one's name" instead of "What was your loved one's name"

Say "Please share your feelings and memories" instead of "Just try to stop thinking about it"

Say "I know how much you miss them here" instead of  
"They are in a better place"

Say "I know that missing them will be forever" instead of  
"Time to get over it"

Say "You know yourself best" instead of  
"You need to ...; You should ...; You have to ..."

Say "I don't know what to say" instead of NOTHING

