



HOW TO HELP THE BEREAVED

Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D., CHT, CT, GMS

When someone you know is grieving the death of a loved one, you may feel helpless and not know what to say or how to help. There are many things that you can do to help ease the pain of grief. Here are a few things that will help the bereaved:

- Acknowledge the loss.
- Be supportive. Visit or call to say, "I care and want to help."
- Say something (no RIGHT or WRONG words!)
- Use deceased's name.
- Be available. The bereaved need direct help, provide a meal, do errands, offer to baby-sit surviving children.
- Don't minimize or depersonalize the loss. No one can know how someone else feels. Do not compare or judge the loss or the reactions to it.
- Avoid clichés.
- Don't minimize or depersonalize loss.
- Leave invitation to talk.
- LISTEN. You do not have to talk except to say, "Tell me about your loved one." Ask, but don't pry.
- Don't rush the grief process. Self-regulating time clock.
- Be patient. Grief lasts far longer than anyone assumes!
- Share feelings, but DO NOT COMPARE losses.
- If you see/sense substance abuse or dependency, quietly offer support. Never use a SHOULD statement.

- Be responsive to the changes a grieving person experiences. Don't make the bereaved the "office project" to cheer up. Some depression is an expected and necessary part of the journey.
- Break the ISOLATION by encouraging others to interact.
- Remember IMPORTANT DAYS (IF KNOWN).
- Keep in check your impulse to GUIDE the process.
- BE THERE! It matters less what you say than that you say something! Your presence is the most healing gift you can give. And continue to be there long after you think they should "be over it". Grief takes a looong time and the gift of presence is timeless.
- DON'T TRY TO FIND SOMETHING POSITIVE IN THE LOSS. Don't try to make sense of the death or find a reason. The bereaved must search for their own meanings in the death of someone they love.



LOSS HURTS! WE ALL GRIEVE ALONE, BUT WE DO NOT HAVE TO BE ALONE AS WE GRIEVE. Help us remember our loved one. There is no such thing as "closure" when it comes to love. The only thing that closes at a funeral is the casket! You don't stop loving someone just because they died. Talk about the deceased, share your memories and let me share mine.