

Supporting a Grieving Loved One

THINGS TO DO/SAY

- "I can't know exactly what you're feeling right now but I just want to let you know that I'm here for you." (Instead of avoiding or saying nothing.)
- Listen with love and without judgment as your loved one processes their feelings.
- Be honest that there are no "perfect words" but that you love them and are there for them.
- Be flexible to their way of grieving and keep plans loose.
- Say the name of the deceased rather than a generic "I'm sorry for your loss."
- Keep their loved one's memory alive through sharing stories and specific things you remember about them.
- Support your loved one in creating new rituals/ways to honor the deceased.
- Let your loved one cry and release their emotions without judgment.
- Acknowledge their pain and resist trying to "fix" anything.
- Have patience as your loved one processes their loss. Healing is an ongoing journey and cannot be rushed.
- Pitch in where you see help is needed. (Meals, housework, pets, etc.)
- Put reminders for anniversaries/special days in your calendar so that you can reach out on those days.
- Keep reaching out and checking in way past the funeral.
- Respect their requests for some space and time to rest. Grieving is exhausting.
- Remind them that they have permission to feel their feelings and that grief is normal.
- Remind the griever that it is okay to set boundaries when it comes to their support circle.
- Hold their hand or give them a hug if they're comfortable with touch.
- Offer resources for professional support, especially if your loved one is falling into hopelessness or turning to unhealthy coping methods (e.g., self neglect, isolating, substance abuse, etc)
- See 'Healing Resources' page at www.hercreativewellness.com

THINGS NOT TO DO/SAY

- Do not tell someone to "get over" their grief or loss. Their loved one will always be in their heart as they heal and move forward. One does not "get over" or forget a loss.
- Never suggest that a loss can be replaced. For instance, if someone loses a child, don't say "at least you can have another." Nothing can replace the loved one who died.
- Do not judge how someone is managing/expressing their grief or suggest that they're doing it wrong. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.
- Avoid saying, "I know how you feel." Even if you've been through a similar loss, all relationships are unique and different.
- Do not shut down your loved one's feelings. They must feel their grief and are allowed to experience a wide variety of emotions as they navigate their pain.
- Do not say "at least they're in a better place." They will likely feel the best place for the deceased is by their side.
- Instead of an open-ended, "how can I help?" Rather, look where you can be of support and take action if they're okay with it.
- Do not force them into activities they're not ready for.
- If they've lost a partner, don't ask when they plan to start dating again or say "you'll find another."
- Avoid "you should", "you will" or "at least" statements (e.g. "You should be thankful for..." or "At least they died doing what they loved.")
- Do not try giving advice. Practice being a compassionate listener instead.
- Avoid pushing your faith on the grieving person. Be respectful of their own beliefs.
- Avoid saying, "Time heals all wounds." It is not about time itself, but about the griever processing and doing the work of grieving.
- Do not encourage constant busy-ness in the effort to help them avoid their grief.
- Never say, "You have to be strong and get it together." This is not honoring the loss or affirming their grief. Grieving takes strength, bravery, gentleness, and vulnerability. Healing will take as long as it takes.