

Best Ways to Comfort Grieving Friends and Loved Ones

Knowing that someone you care about is grieving the loss of a friend or loved one often presents a challenging dilemma. You want to support them yet may be unsure of how to best comfort them.

A grieving loved one experiences many emotions including sadness, anxiety and anger, often simultaneously. They may feel alone in their grief and need your support now more than ever.

People often worry about what to say to a grieving person, but listening may be more important. They need to feel that it's okay to acknowledge their loved one and loss.

You needn't have all the answers or know exactly what to do. The most important thing you can do for a grieving person is to simply be there. Your caring presence will help them cope and begin to heal.

If you are also grieving, remember that sharing your loss and helping someone may provide a welcome distraction from your grief. You may gain strength and relief from connecting with and providing support to another person.

You can help a grieving friend or loved one by doing the following:

- Be available and present
- Be an attentive, compassionate listener
- Be patient; remember that everyone grieves differently
- Ask about their feelings and loss
- Expect a full range of emotions
- Sit quietly with them; they may need silent, supportive company most
- Respect their grief by saying things like "I'm sorry you're hurting."
- Offer support by saying things like "How can I be most helpful to you?"
- Encourage them by saying things like "I'm here for you."
- Follow through with offers of help

Grieving continues long after the final services are over and the cards and flowers stop. The grieving process may be shorter or longer than you expect. Practical offers of on-going support include:

- Help with final arrangements, like arranging a DVD tribute or contacting loved ones
- Help research support groups and grief counseling resources
- Offer to drive or accompany them to a meeting or appointment
- Shop for groceries or run errands
- Deliver a meal to their home
- Offer child care or help with pets
- Help manage insurance forms, bills or other paperwork
- Help with housework, laundry or yard work
- Invite them to go for a walk, to lunch or a movie
- Share an activity like a card game, art or cooking project
- Remember their loss on holidays, anniversaries and other important days
- Call, email or write to them periodically
- Be patient with their recovery

Encouraging someone you care about during their time of grief acknowledges the sadness of their loss while offering invaluable support, structure and a reaffirmation of life. Visit www.passare.com for expert grief resources and information on many End-of-Life Management topics.