



Helping Loss Survivors in their Grief Journey

Be there. It's okay if you don't know what to say. Just say you are sorry. Keep reaching out even if you don't hear back. It is important to let loss survivors know they are not alone. Your presence, phone calls, letters, etc. will be comforting and reassuring.

Listen. Sometimes people are afraid to talk and ask questions because they are worried it will make the loss survivor emotional. Many loss survivors desperately want to talk about their loved one and need to tell their story over and over to someone who can listen patiently.

Say the person's name. Some people crave hearing their loved one's name. It hurts so much more when no one talks about the person they lost. Share a favorite memory.

Offer to help with specific tasks. Instead of saying, "let me know what I can do", just go ahead!

...drop off a meal

...walk the dog

...help with the kids

...do the laundry

...make phone calls, organize the mail or bills

...help think through finances, insurance, etc.

Offer to help with clean up and with funeral arrangements.

Recognize the loss directly to children-write a note or card.

Realize that the grief journey is ongoing and is different for everyone- some people need time off while others need to return to work, some like group support while others may want to read, etc. Let the person know it is okay to grieve in their own way.

Help connect the loss survivor to support-support groups, therapy, books, other loss survivors, etc.

Be aware of extra support needed around special dates: anniversary of the loss, birthday, wedding anniversary, holidays. Help make new traditions if appropriate.

Some things not to say:

"I know how you feel."

"You need to move on."

"Everything happens for a reason."

"Let me know if you need something."

"He's in a better place now."

"Be strong."

Be there for the long haul. Often support disappears after the first month or so. Continue with support, cards, etc. Keep remembering and talking about the person who died. Even though they are no longer living, they are still an important part of the loss survivor's life.