

# G R I E F N O T E S

## Helping Family & Friends Grieve

Many of us search for the “right thing” to say when greeting and talking with a bereaved individual. **REMEMBER: There are NO WORDS to make them feel better.**

- Keep the conversation simple.
- Limit your condolence to “I’m sorry”. If it feels, right share a humorous story or relate how their loved one had a positive impact on your life.
- Speak their loved one’s name. They are living the loss every second of the day and they want to hear their loved one’s name.
- They need to talk about their loss often. Grieving people may tell the same story literally hundreds of times. This is normal and okay. Talking about the facts surrounding the death is an effective way to make the death real.
- Don’t promise to do something and then not follow through and do it. Broken promises are remembered.
- Be concrete in your offer to help. Tell the bereaved what you can do for them, you can even provide a list of the things you can do.
- Don’t expect them to call you if they need anything. You need to reach out. You may be turned down many times, but keep asking.
- A card or phone call at the one-year anniversary is often welcomed. A simple note of letting the bereaved know their loved one is remembered is often appreciated.
- Sharing with the bereaved that their grief responses are normal is reassuring.
- Do not compare, judge or hurry the bereaved. This is an individual journey.
- Finally remember grief can not be fixed, it has to be experienced.

## Comments to Comfort and Comments to Avoid

Everyone struggles to find the right words to convey our thoughts and concerns. Some comments can cause unnecessary pain, anger and distract the bereaved. This often leads the bereaved to move from grief to focusing already limited energy on making you understand the depths of their pain.

Consider the impact of “comforting” comments on children. Children tune into adults talking about the loss and because they are concrete thinkers what they hear is a literal interpretation of what is being said. How mad and scared would you be to hear someone say “God took Mommy to heaven because he needed her more.”

Remember: there are no words that “fix” the pain of grief. You can never understand the intense pain of grief of another individual.

COMMENTS TO COMFORT	COMMENTS TO AVOID
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will never forget him.</li> <li>• “When you are dead, the body does not move.”</li> <li>• “Being dead doesn't hurt.”</li> <li>• “Your brother can never come back.”</li> <li>• “Daddy loves your very much”</li> <li>• “It isn't anyone's fault.”</li> <li>• “It's all right to laugh and play.”</li> <li>• “It isn't your fault.”</li> <li>• “It's okay to cry.”</li> <li>• “Yes, it's tough.”</li> <li>• “It's okay to be angry.”</li> <li>• “I don't know.”</li> <li>• “It isn't fair, is it?”</li> <li>• “The rest of us will take care of you.”</li> <li>• “I wish I could take the hurt away.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I understand exactly how you feel.”</li> <li>• “She's been put to rest.”</li> <li>• “Try to put it behind you.”</li> <li>• “You still have other children/siblings.”</li> <li>• “We must be brave and accept God's will.”</li> <li>• “God took Mommy to heaven.”</li> <li>• “Grandma died because she was sick.”</li> <li>• “Your sister has gone on long journey.”</li> <li>• “Daddy's watching you from Heaven.”</li> <li>• “He's so much better off in Heaven.”</li> <li>• “You must be strong for your children, mother, father etc.”</li> <li>• “At least she is not suffering anymore.”</li> </ul>

For more grief information contact Hospice Bereavement Services at 315-265-3105 or by e-mail [mjones@hospiceslv.org](mailto:mjones@hospiceslv.org)

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