



22 Ways to Support a Friend in Grief

By Victor Parachin, MDIV.

1. Get in touch. As soon as you learn about the death, visit, phone or write. Even if some time has passed, it's never too late to express your concern and offer help.
2. Accept your friend's emotions. If angry, listen. If sad, console.
3. Bring a meal. Do this right after the loss and from time to time in the weeks and months after.
4. Avoid clichés and easy answers. He had a good life...She's out of pain...At least you had 25 years together... These may all be true statements but they are not likely to help. Such sentences tend to minimize the loss. A better response is a simple "I'm sorry" or "What can I do to help?"
5. Offer to clean house. The bereaved often don't have the energy to do this and a clean home can lift the spirits. Bring your own cleaning supplies. Be sure to always ask first so you don't pick up something they want left as is (maybe the last item their loved one touched).
6. Drop off flowers.
7. Bring over some inspirational magazines or tapes of soothing music.
8. Give the gift of your time. Walk and talk together.
9. Hug your friend. An embrace conveys deep affection and support when grief is hard and heavy.
10. Invite your friend over for dinner or out to a movie, concert, or sporting event.
11. If your friend has young children, offer to baby-sit for an evening, a day or even a week.
12. Offer your skills and expertise with insurance forms, probate or taxes. If you have "handyman" skills, offer those. They can be invaluable.
13. Do everything you can to plant seeds of hope. Let your friend know you believe in him or her and know that, day by day, he or she will get through grief.
14. Remember your friend on special days such as anniversaries, birthdays and holidays.
15. Encourage activities you and your friend can do together, such as joining reading or discussion groups or taking a class together.
16. Talk about the deceased and the loss. Your friend wants and needs people who are open to hearing about the feelings of love and loss.
17. Visit regularly with your friend. Not every visit needs to be emotionally charged but just the simple fact of your presence will be comforting.
18. Write notes of encouragement. These can be read and reread for cheer and inspiration.
19. Be practical and specific. Think about your friend's needs. If one offer is refused, don't be hurt and don't give up. Try again and again.
20. Let the bereaved cry. Remember, tears are healing. Don't be embarrassed or intimidated if, during conversation, tears flow. It's natural, appropriate and healthy to cry when there has been a loss.
21. Accept silence. Don't force conversation if they don't feel like talking. Take their lead, emotionally.
22. Exercise patience with your friend. The journey of grief can take as long as four or five years.