

How to Help a Friend

Friends who are grieving can benefit from the support of others. It can be a difficult situation when someone is having trouble and you may be uncertain how to help them, uncertain whether they want your help, or uncertain how to get them to someone who can offer them additional help. Your encouragement and concern could make a difference.

1. Communicate your concern. Initiate conversation, listen, and be willing to talk about the loss.
2. Take some kind of action- a phone call, a card, a hug, attend a memorial service.
3. Be available and let them know how to contact you.
4. Be a good listener- avoid telling them what to do or feel and avoid clichés such as “you have to move on”
5. Avoid making judgments about how a person should feel while grieving. People express their thoughts and emotions in a variety of ways with different levels of intensity and frequency.
6. Be patient. Grievers have to talk to heal, and many times, it is easy to be impatient. There is no fixed time in which the bereavement process is to be over.
7. Encourage them to take care of themselves.
8. Accept your own limitations. Some situations may require additional professional support.
9. Be supportive but don't attempt to give too much encouragement and reassurance when a griever is in the depressed stage. It will not be very helpful.
10. Talk openly and honestly about the situation unless they do not want to.
11. Use an appropriate, caring, and conversational tone of voice.
12. Show that you care. Listen attentively and show genuine interest. Share your feelings and feel free to talk about any similar experience you may have had. However, avoid using the phrase “I know just how you feel.”
13. If symptoms of depression are very severe or persistent and the griever is not coping with day to day activities, encourage them to get professional help.
14. Be aware that a person experiencing grief may not always feel “better” after talking. They may still feel bad about the situation and their loss. We can be helpful by accepting and communicating our awareness of the appropriateness of their grieving. Our support, acceptance, and understanding over a period of time can be helpful to our loved one as they attempt to resume a more normal, active life.