

Helping a Grieving Friend - for Adults

Watching a friend or loved one grieve can be difficult, and even more so when we feel like we don't know what to do or say to help them. Everyone's grief journey is different, and friends who are grieving may experience any number of thoughts, feelings or changes, many of which may be unexpected. It might look like they have everything under control, they may have isolated themselves, they may have become impulsive, or report being frequently ill. These are just a few possible reactions.

How do we support these friends in the midst of grief? At Judi's House, we hear from many what they appreciated and what they wish their friends and family could do to support them more. Here are a few of those ideas:

What to say

- Anything that truly comes from the desire to be there for them. Even if that means saying "I don't know what to say right now, I just want to be here for you."
 - Resources on this:
 - Brene Brown's Ted Talk on vulnerability:
 - https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability?language=en
 - Brene Brown's take on empathy:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewvgu369Jw>
 - *There is No Good Card for This: What to Say and Do When Life is Scary, Awful, and Unfair to People You Love* by Kelsey Crowe and Emily McDowell
- Listen. Sometimes listening is even more powerful evidence of supporting someone than saying anything. You don't have to have an answer and sometimes it is best not to. Just being there can be more supportive than anything else.

How to help

- Ask them how they're doing and let them know you're there for them.
- See if there are routine tasks that they need support with, like taking the kids to school or running an errand.
- Don't be afraid to talk about the person who died. Ask them to share memories about the person who died.

What do grieving families say they want people to know?

- Grief is a process, not an event.
- Please give me space.

- I want to remember.
- Talk about my special person.
- Sometimes saying "I'm sorry for your loss" makes me feel like I have to take care of you.
- I'm not doing this to get attention. I'm hurting.
- It's okay if you don't have all the answers.
- The little things really matter: laughing, feeling safe, telling stories, being patient, giving hugs, sharing memories, listening, playing, etc.