

# How To Help Me In My Grief



- **Speak to me of the obvious**

I know it's painful to talk with me about my grief, but I feel less alone when I know others remember. Please, above all else, don't avoid me. I need to know that you care. When you are silent about my grief, I feel more isolated and I'm tempted to believe you have forgotten. It's okay to use the name of the one who has died and to speak of what has happened.

- **I Need your warm caring more than "right words"**

It's awkward for me to hear you hunt for profound words. I'm hungry to here, "I've been thinking of you, "I'm here, "You're in my heart, "I'll call you again tomorrow (or in a few days or next week)." A note, a phone call, a hand on my shoulder or a hug helps. I find it hard to glibly answer the question over and over, "How are you?" I'm grieving and that means I generally feel lousy. Be with me and tell me you care. It's easier for me to hear you than to find a quick answer about me.

- **I know my sadness will last longer than either you or I want it to.**

I'm afraid you will tire of my grief and I'll need to hide it from you. I'm afraid you'll avoid me if I don't pull it together soon-and then I'll be even more alone. Let me know you're with me for the long haul. It helps when others remember key date-the birthdays, holidays, anniversary dates of the heart. I need a few people to still be there and remember next week, next month, next year- a few people who don't expect me to be "over it" soon.

- **Please let go of trying to fix my pain**

I'm likely to be on overload with advice and suggestions. Be patient with me if I can't concentrate enough to read the books you bring me. When others try to tell me why this tragedy has happened, what I should do or what I should feel, I wonder if it isn't their own sense of helplessness they are trying to quiet. Please ask me what I need. And if I don't know, give me a hug and let it be okay. I know I'm not much fun right now. Somehow I need to hear both that I have a right to be sad, and that you believe I will gradually find my way through this painful time.

- **Share your stories and memories**

One of the sweetest gifts I can imagine is stories about how the one I miss so much now also touched your life. Sweet moments, funny moments, stray memories are like a photograph I can add to my memory album. It's never too soon or too late to share them with me. I welcome them and I thank you for them.

- **Offer to help with daily practical things**

I know others want to be caring and helpful to me-and sometimes I'm frustrated not knowing what I need or how to ask. Sometimes ordinary things are a huge help. Maybe you can offer to come eat with me or to go for a walk with me. Ask me if I want time to myself or company. Maybe it's help with the paperwork or taxes, yard work or someone to sit with at a public event that might help. And if I turn you down-whether it's for help or for an outing-be bold enough to ask me again another time.

- **Please remember that we all grieve in our own way.**

I may be clumsy as I struggle to know how to grieve and heal. I may be self-absorbed at times, sometimes insensitive, other times overly sensitive. I may need to talk and talk, and say the story over and over to anyone caring enough to listen. Or I may have a need to be more private and quiet in my grief. I may worry you with how sad I look and how I'm often in tears-or I may worry you that my sadness doesn't show much on the outside. Some of us are outgoing and share things easily and some of us are more reserved. The pain is there for all of us who grieve, even though we show it differently.

- **If you are worried about how I'm doing-it's okay to talk to me directly.**

I know I may not be myself for awhile. I may act in ways that aren't familiar to you or to me. If you get worried about if I'm safe, if I'm doing things that make my healing harder, if you hear me making decisions that don't sound very smart, love me enough to talk to me about it. I'll do my best to listen and consider what you are saying, and I ask you to do your best to also consider if what I'm doing may be one of the many variations in healthy grieving or not.

- **Mostly, thank you, for your love and support**

I'm told the journey through grief is a long one. I may get scared or lost at times. With family and friends solidly there for me I know I can inch my way through this tunnel. Keep me company in the dark times. Stay near until I can see the light again with my own eyes. Your love and caring mean more than I can convey in words

Permission is given to photocopy this page written by Marilyn Gryte, *Grief Digest Magazine*, January 2006