

Helping a Grieving Person

It is often difficult to know what to say to someone who is grieving. The following list of “do’s” and “don’ts” may assist you through this often avoided topic of grieving.

Do

- Do try to understand this particular person
- Do try to respond with “right now you’re feeling.....” statements
- Do talk about the loss
- Do try to empathise
- Do reassure the person of his/her worth and that he/she has the ability to cope with the grief
- Do try to understand the nature of the loss and its ramifications from his/her point of view
- Do indicate that grieving is a process which takes time
- Do encourage the expression of feelings
- Do encourage expression of guilt feelings
- Do give hugs and other expressions of empathy and understanding where appropriate
- Do maintain frequent contact (personally or by phone) - visits need not be long
- Do affirm the person and encourage him/her to do things for him/herself
- Do try to listen to the grieving person’s expression of his/her grief
- Do try and acknowledge by making brief comments about his/her feelings

Don’t

- Don’t generalize
- Don’t use clichés
- Don’t avoid talking about the loss
- Don’t sympathise
- Don’t falsely reassure
- Don’t trivialize loss of things
- Don’t describe the theory of the stages of grief
- Don’t ignore his/her feelings
- Don’t encourage his/her blame of him/herself or of others
- Don’t use touch unless you are comfortable doing that
- Don’t avoid the grieving person when the going seems to be getting tough
- Don’t take over too much and do lots of things for the grieving person
- Don’t talk a lot about grief
- Don’t just drop the person if you find the going is heavy

It is normal and healthy to express the intense emotions relating to loss. Grieving is important for healing the wound of separation. A bereaved person may experience a wide range of feelings and the depth and duration of each experience is different for everyone.



Converge International is your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. To make an appointment or speak to a consultant:

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