

10 Ways to Help a Grieving Person

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1. Contact the person

Make a short visit, write or phone your support. This is not the time for long visits or a Bible study.

2. Encourage the person in his/her own expression of grief

Avoid negative responses such as, "You should not feel that way!" or "Christians don't carry on like this!"

3. Listen without judging

Talk less and listen more. This allows the person to express feelings, no matter how jumbled the thoughts may be.

4. Beware of trying to explain the reason for the loss

Only God knows everything. Our explanations will not engender comfort.

5. Acknowledge the person's own grief journey

Each individual experiences emotional, physical, mental and spiritual reactions which vary from person to person and time to time - even in the same family. Do not try to force a person into a mould.

6. Speak of God's comfort

Grief is a time when one may feel totally alone - not even God seems to be present! Gently share the promise that God will "never leave nor abandon" the grieving. Pray briefly, then leave.

7. Choose literature carefully

Do not give the bereaved anything to read in the first few weeks - it may only inoculate the person against the helpful value of material at a later date.

8. Provide practical support

Do not say, "Let me know if there is anything I can do." Think of actions and do them: clean the car, prepare food, wash and iron, do the shopping, mow the lawn, polish shoes for the funeral.

9. Do not insist on the person coming to worship if they are not ready

God knows the heart, and the person may commune with their Lord alone for some time, before being ready to fellowship with others again.

10. Maintain contact

It's easy to forget to keep in touch. Your visits or phone calls in subsequent months may be a very significant support to the person.

Normal grief may last a few months or several years. By simply walking beside the person, listening and supporting, you will minister in the name of Jesus.