



## *Ten ways to Support a Grieving Relative or Friend*

1. *Be available.* Get in touch and stay in touch either by telephone, e-mail or in person. It is important to know someone is there to listen, support and pitch in and do practical things when necessary.
2. *Be a good listener.* Listen actively. Don't redirect the conversation to you or some experience you have had. It is healing for the bereaved to tell the stories of the relationship, life and death of the person they lost.
3. *Don't probe.* Don't be intrusive or ask questions that the grieving person isn't ready or willing to share with you. If and when the time is right they may share and then they may not. Let the person know you are available and then let them take the lead according to their own personal timing and desires.
4. *Actions speak louder than words.* Pitch in and help. If there are children, comfort them, do the laundry, get groceries, cook a few meals, do errands, clean the house, make phone calls. Often the bereaved, especially close to the time of the loss cannot think of what to ask you to do when you volunteer. Better to just do it.
5. *Accept silence.* If the mourner doesn't want to talk, accept silence and respect the privacy needs of the person. Words are often insufficient to express condolences. Often a touch on the hand or shoulder or a hug says more than words.
6. *Avoid clichés.* Saying things that reflect your beliefs may be offensive to the mourner. Don't say trite things like, "He is better off now," or "She had a good life," or he is in heaven now. "A simple "I'm sorry," is much better.
7. *Don't minimize the loss.* The loss of a loved one is always emotionally traumatic and requires a healing process just as any physical injury does. Even if you knew there were problems in the relationship it will still be a difficult time for the mourner, Respects this and give him or her all the time they need to heal.
8. *Avoid pity.* Pity destroys self-respect and may result in the mourner avoiding you. Let them take the lead. Simply acknowledge the loss, the change in his or her life and drop it. Don't dwell on the loss unless the mourner want to talk about it, then just listen in a supportive way.
9. *Don't try to fix it.* The death and loss of a loved one cannot be fixed. Healing the feeling of grief is a process that takes a long time. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Some people cry some don't. Let the mourner do what ever is necessary in whatever time frame to heal.
10. *Stay in touch.* Be there. Be available. Your friend will need your support for a long time after the funeral or Memorial service. Check up on him or her to see how they are doing; offer your help as needed. Holidays, birthdays and anniversary dates are especially difficult the first year. Check in at these times. Plan outings and trips as appropriate to reengage the mourner in the here and now.