

Tips for supporting someone going through grief: 5 things to do and avoid



How to support someone experiencing loss



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Supporting a friend or family member through grief can be challenging and filled with uncertainty, but there are steps you can take to help.

Grief is a difficult journey to navigate alone. It can be a heartbreaking experience for anyone, but it becomes even more challenging when you have a loved one who is grieving. As a friend, family member, or colleague, it is essential to provide support during this challenging time. But sometimes, it can be challenging to know how to offer support without causing further distress. So, we're going to give you five dos and don'ts on how to support someone who's grieving.

1 Do listen

The first thing you should do is offer a listening ear without judgement. Allow the grieving person to express their feelings by actively listening to them. Let them know they have your undivided attention, and you are happy to listen to anything they need to say. Remember that everyone grieves differently and may need to talk about it in various ways. Give them space to communicate their emotions without offering solutions or minimising their feelings.

2 Don't force positive thinking

It is best not to try to force positive thinking onto someone who is grieving. They need to know that it is okay to acknowledge the pain, sadness, and other emotions they may be experiencing. Allow them to grieve and mourn in their own way. Instead of pushing for positivity, encourage them to take the time they need to process their feelings and offer support if they need it.

3 Do offer practical support

During this difficult time, practical help can be invaluable. Consider asking how you can help with practical tasks such as cooking, cleaning, or childcare. Your offer of practical support shows that you are there to help in any way possible. When you offer to help with practical tasks, ensure that you follow through with your offer.

4 Don't try to fix the grieving person's feelings

You can't fix the feelings of someone who is grieving, and you shouldn't try. Instead, focus on offering your support, your love, and your understanding. Every person grieves differently, and there is no right or wrong way to do it. If you are unsure about how to help them, ask them what they need, and let them guide you.

5 Do respect boundaries

It is incredibly important to respect the boundaries and needs of a person as they navigate the grieving process. This might include their need for space or time away. Ensure they know that you are there for them if they need you, but never force them to accept your help if they are not ready. Remember, grief is a highly personal experience that takes time, and everyone handles it differently.

In the face of grief, each journey is unique. The grief process is often described as five stages - denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Not everyone goes through all of these phases, and not necessarily in that order.

But these are common for many people and a normal part of the process. You may recognise these emotions in friends, family or colleagues. While it may seem like a daunting task to support a grieving friend, remember that your mere presence can make a world of difference.

Loss is a part of life, but it is through these difficult times that the strength of human connection shines brightest. By being a compassionate, understanding, and patient presence, you can help ease their burden and remind them that they are not alone. Remember, every small act of kindness counts and has the potential to bring light into their darkest hours.

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