

Care Tips for Family and Friends

Sharing a family member's or friend's grief is a privilege.

It is sharing a very intimate part of that person's life. Although you may feel speechless and helpless, you can be of assistance. You can provide more sensitive support if you prepare yourself. The more you understand about mourning, the more you can give.



We suggest:

Remember your own death experiences.

How did that person die?

How did you respond?

What did others say or do that was or was not helpful?

Consider the circumstances of your friend's loved one's death and consider the impact for your friend.

Use realistic words, like "dead" or "died." It affirms the reality of the death and helps your friend to gradually adjust to that loss.

Avoid words that contribute to denial, e.g. "passed on" or "gone to his reward."

Initiate being with the bereaved, the "gift of your presence".

Be there emotionally and physically through hugs or touch. But be sensitive as to whether being touched is all right.

Don't avoid the grief-stricken one. It makes the person feel abandoned and alone.

Your presence can mean more than words. The pain of grief is theirs. Don't try to take it from them. It is essential for their growth and healing. (The grief you feel may be your own from an earlier loss.)