

SEVEN WAYS TO HELP WHEN SOMEONE DIES

FIND THE TIME

Most people "find the time" to attend the funeral, but seldom keep "finding the time" to stay in touch with bereaved friends. At the time of the death and for many months afterward, your companionship and thoughtful concern are very important! Since bereaved persons seldom call for help when they need a friend, make it your business to "find the time" and call on them.

RESPOND

Bereaved persons need to be reassured that no matter what has happened, or is yet to come, there are people who genuinely care for them, and who cared about the deceased. However, expressions that say, "I understand" or attempt to explain "why", often carry unintentional assumptions that do more harm than good. As a rule, remember:

*'A simple hug or hand-shake will show them that you care;
They'll appreciate a memory, if a short one you can share;
But as much as any other thing you give a grieving friend,
It's your patient gift of listening he'll remember in the end.'*

INVOLVE

Involvement with others is the very elixir of life, but finding your place in the human race is tough when you're suddenly running solo. Encourage your friend to become involved again but resist the temptation to become a "match-maker". Expect him or her to relate differently to old friends and allow enough "latitude" for him or her to try on new roles. In short "involve" the bereaved person in life again by inviting them to share freely in yours.

ENCOURAGE

True encouragement is more than just a pat-on-the-back with a handful of platitudes! It is born of an honest belief in someone and must be communicated sincerely in both word and deed. It is the power that gives us the strength to believe in ourselves. Like vitamin "C", you need a little encouragement every day. If you would help a grieving friend, be sure you give your share - today!

NEVER ASSUME

Never assume you can't make a difference. It was Longfellow who wrote, "Give what you have, to someone; it may be far greater than you dare to think". The three most important things we have to give to each other are our time, our undivided attention and our unflinching love. The least important is our advice.

DESERVE CONFIDENCE

The word "confidence" is derived from the word "confide" and alludes precisely to that quality of trust we place in our true friends. If the burdens of grief are to be borne successfully they must be shared, "confided", with someone we can trust implicitly. As friends, when we are called upon to share another's sorrow, we must keep watch of ourselves that we always deserve such "confidence".

SHARE YOUR FRIENDSHIP FREQUENTLY

Bereaved persons often feel isolated because friends are unsure of what to say. Usually, a cordial enquiry will open a conversation but from there it is best to let your friend lead the way. Try not to make judgments or give advice unless asked, but know that learning to express all the mixed emotions of grief is the key to their healing. As the sun's rays help heal the body, so friendship is a sunshine to the soul. Share your friendship frequently, and let its light shine in the darkness of those you love.

- B.H. Conley

FRIENDS

*You don't need to say you 're sorry
It's written in your face
I know you share my sadness
By the warmth of your embrace.
Don't try to justify the "why ",
Or "how" this came to be
Or explain away the mystery
Of death's reality.
Just know that more than any words
The thing I hold most dear
Is the friendship in your handshake
And the fact that you are here.*

- Bruce H. Conley

APPRECIATION

*You come, friend, with your hand
Outstretched in love to help me stand.
Your caring gives me comfort
And strength, to know I can.
My burden now seems lighter
And easier to bear,
Just knowing that you care for me
And that your hand is there,*

- K. L. Howard

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