

Grief Notes

May 2026

Helping Someone Who Is Grieving by Linda Hopkins, Bereavement Coordinator

There may be people in your life who are grieving, whom you want to support, or who are wondering how to support you. Many people feel awkward being with someone who has suffered a recent loss, and they wonder what to do. This article suggests ways to support someone who is grieving.

There are social conventions that help after a death. Some examples are condolence calls, notes, cards, and visits. When grief is fresh, it can be hard for the bereaved to concentrate and take care of every detail. There are practical tasks whose completion will be appreciated. Examples are bringing meals, offering rides, and caring for children. Attendance at funerals, memorials, and celebrations of life will be appreciated.

Knowing what to say to a grieving person is a challenge for many people. That you are present is often more important than any words you say. More general expressions of sorrow like “I am sorry for your loss” may be more comforting than clichés like “Everything happens for a reason,” “At least she isn’t suffering,” or “It must be a relief to have the suffering over.” Words like these that are meant to console

will hurt if what the grieving person is thinking, is “I wish I could have them back for even one more day.”



As the first weeks of bereavement pass, being with the bereaved can be awkward. You may wonder whether or not to ask how they are doing. There is no simple answer to this question. Some individuals are hurt if no one asks. Others are upset to be asked. If you are a bereaved person who wishes people would talk about your loved one, talking about them yourself will let others know you are comfortable with that. If you are wondering what a bereaved person wants, ask them.

Support is often abundant in the early days after a death. Once the initial

support is over and everyone else resumes their usual life, the grieving person may be more aware of missing the person who has died and more aware of their grief. Continuing to offer support as the months go by helps with this. Ways to do this include staying in touch, inviting the bereaved to join you for activities, checking in on how they are doing, and providing an opportunity to talk about the deceased.

A grieving person may be hesitant to talk about their grief as they do not want others in their life to worry about them, and they may worry talking about grief will be a burden. Anyone can provide an opening for support by mentioning the deceased and sharing a memory. This may be particularly helpful for holidays and special days like birthdays and anniversaries. These are times when there may be fear of talking about the deceased for fear of upsetting someone, yet these are also times when absence is deeply felt and talking about that will help.

The suggestions in this article are meant to help you, your friends, and family as you all grieve the absence of a person important in your life. You are welcome to contact the hospice bereavement coordinator for additional support.