

Toolkit: Helping Others Cope with Grief

If someone you know has lost a loved one, you may need to provide help and support as they grieve. It's natural to want to offer compassion and sympathy to someone who has suffered a loss. People who have been bereaved may want to talk about the person who has died. One of the most helpful things you can do is simply listen, and give them time and space to grieve. Offering specific practical help – not vague general offers – can also be very helpful.

DO:

- **Be there for the person who is grieving** – pick up the phone, write a letter/email, call by or arrange to visit.
- **Offer practical help** – cooking, cleaning, or shopping might be the last thing on their mind.
- **Accept that everyone grieves in their own way** – there is no 'normal' way.
- **Encourage the person to talk, but accept if they do not wish to.** Listen to them.
- **Create an environment in which the bereaved person can be themselves and show their feelings.**
- **Don't forget to take care of yourself!**

DO NOT

- **Avoid someone who has been bereaved.**
- **Use phrases such as "I understand how you feel"; "You'll get over it"** – this can make the person feel as if their grief is irrelevant, undesirable or "not allowed".
- **Tell them it's time to move on, that they should be over it** - how long a person needs to grieve is entirely individual.
- **Be alarmed if the bereaved person doesn't want to talk or demonstrates anger.**
- **Underestimate how emotionally draining it can be when supporting a grieving person.**

Be aware that grieving is not a linear process. One day you might be fine, and the next, you might - unexpectedly - feel just like you felt when you first lost your loved one. Do not be surprised, or see this as a failure of any kind if this happens – it is normal.



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Sources and References

- **About Grief** - <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/about-grief>
- **Traumatic Loss** - <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/traumatic-bereavement/traumatic-loss>
- **Restoring Hope** - https://www.cruse.org.uk/sites/default/files/default_images/pdf/Documents-and-fact-sheets/Restoring_Hope_Jul2017.pdf
- **Helping Others Cope with Grief** - <https://foh.psc.gov/NYCU/CopingTips.pdf>
- **The Compassionate Friends** - <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/>
- **Crisis Support Services of Nevada** - <https://cssnv.org/>
- **Coping with Grief and Loss** - <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/coping-with-grief-and-loss.htm>