

How to Help Someone Who is Grieving

It's important that we all look out for each other. If you notice that someone else is struggling with grief or symptoms of trauma, please talk to them or tell someone who can help. If you feel that person would benefit from talking to a counselor, consider walking them to CAPS or helping them make the phone call for an appointment (805-893-4411).

How to Help:

- Get in touch and stay in touch with the griever; sympathetic company usually is welcome and is one of the best kinds of support we can offer.
- Be yourself—express your natural concern openly.
- Be willing to talk about the loss, and encourage talking about it if the griever is comfortable with it.
- Be a good listener—accept, don't judge, what you hear.
- Accept silence or anger; respond by providing emotional support as best you can.
- Reassure the griever that grief symptoms such as anger, guilt, and sadness are normal.
- Be patient; it takes time for the griever to accept the loss and to deal with the changes it has caused.
- Allow the griever the time and behavior needed to come to terms with the loss.
- It may be helpful to say things like:
 - “The feelings you're having are understandable.”
 - “What help do you need right now?”
 - “I'd like to be with you, if that's all right.”
 - “I don't know what to say, but I care.”

What to Avoid:

- Don't push a resistant griever to talk about the loss.
- Don't discourage expressions of grief; repetitive accounts of the loss are part of the healing process for the griever.
- Don't give in to the impulse to talk about your own losses.
- Don't attempt to resolve the griever's feelings of grief.
- It may NOT be helpful to say things like:
 - “Be strong.”
 - “It will be better soon.”
 - “Count your blessings.”
 - “You're better off than other people.”
 - “Keep your chin up.”
 - “You have to put it behind you and get on with your life.”
 - “Time will heal.”

These platitudes can alienate and do not help the griever.