Bereavement
How other people can help

Do talk to me
Even if you don’t know what to say. Knowing you are sorry is a good start.

Don’t avoid me
It hurts so much when you cross the road when you see me coming rather than be willing to face me.

Do give me space
Give me space to be as I am, tears and all. Don’t try to discourage my tears and please be willing to cry with me too.

Don’t act differently
Don’t worry about feeling ‘awkward’ – be normal, yourself, my friend – I am still the same person.

Do keep in touch
Keep phoning especially as weeks turn into months and years. Be available.

Don’t wait for me
Don’t wait to be asked for help - initially there is so much help I need with just about everything.

Do give support
Give practical support. I’m not able to cope with routine at the moment so providing meals, help at home and with my children is vital.

Overload me
Don’t overload me with responsibilities. For a while it will be all I can cope with to get out of bed and get dressed.

For more information on bereavement support please visit:
www.careforthefamily.org.uk/family-life/bereavement-support
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Do talk about the person who has died
I love to hear your memories of him/her.

Don’t ignore the loss
Or avoid asking questions about the person who has died.

Do show sensitivity
Ring first – don’t just show up at the door. Although sometimes it may be just the break I need – be prepared for me to say that I can’t cope with company just now.

Don’t find positives
Don’t try to find something positive about the death of the person I’m grieving for.

Do offer specific help
“i’ll pick the children up on Friday, take them out, give them tea and bring them back at 6.”

Don’t offer help then disappear
Don’t phone and just say “let me know if I can help” and leave it at that.

Do talk about everyday things that matter as well.
I’m still interested in you and what is going on around me, but ‘small talk’ can seem very trivial.

Don’t Disrespect my beliefs
If you have a faith, don’t be super-spiritual and feel you have to defend God’s case.

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Do listen
It can be more important than what you say. Sometimes I need to know that I am heard.

Do remember that there is no time limit on grief
It will go on long after others expect. Please walk that road with me.

Don’t come out with platitudes, trite answers or comments
Right now all I want is to have him/her back.

Don’t expect me to be over it
I will never get over it, but I will adapt and find a way to adjust to life as it is from now on.

Do still invite me to events and parties
But understand if sometimes I feel unable to go or have to leave early.

Don’t avoid the issue publicly
In schools, churches etc.

Do help with planning and suggestions for the funeral
You could spend months thinking of a wedding and just a few days for a funeral. The details are very important.

Don’t think that death puts a ban on laughter
Remembering and enjoying the good times we had together is important and helps me to heal.

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Do remember that appearances can be deceptive
I may look as if I’m coping okay, but inside I may be falling apart.

Don’t be unprepared for the truth
Don’t ask me how I am if you only want to hear “I’m okay thank you.”

Do invite me out to coffee or lunch
Just to change the scene for a while.

Don’t tell me that you’ve been too busy to phone or get in touch
Better to say “I didn’t know what to say.”

Do be ready to listen
To all the jumble of emotions I may be feeling without being judgemental.

Don’t try and give me answers
It is unlikely that you will have any that will satisfy me – just allow me to express all my fears, questions and doubts.

Do encourage me
To be kind to myself and not to push myself to meet other people’s expectations of how I should be.

Don’t measure the way I react
Or the emotions I express by your own expectations or experience. My grief is unique to me.

Do be aware that there will be times when I don’t feel able to talk
But this doesn’t mean I won’t want to talk at another time.

Don’t feel you have to do something
Just be there.

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