

Remember there's no time limit on grief

Don't expect a bereaved person to get over their loss in a set amount of time. They will never get over it, but they will adapt and find a way to adjust to life as it now is. And don't measure the way they react and the emotions they express by your own expectations or experience. Their grief is unique to them and can go on long after others expect. Walk that road with them. Don't feel you have to do something – just be there. Remember that appearances can be deceptive – they may look as if they are coping OK, but inside they may be falling apart.

Don't underestimate your role

Losing a loved one is possibly the most difficult thing anyone can experience and having a friend or relative supporting them through it can make all the difference on their grief journey.



Helping you to support those who are grieving



For more information, articles and tips on family life visit www.careforthefamily.org.uk

You might like to:

- **Read** First Steps Through Bereavement by Sue Mayfield www.careforthefamily.org.uk/shop
- **Visit** the Bereavement section of our website www.careforthefamily.org.uk/family-life/bereavement-support
- **Signpost** to the Bereaved Parent section of our website www.careforthefamily.org.uk/bps or the Widowed Young section of our website www.careforthefamily.org.uk/wys



Care for the Family is a registered charity and has been working to strengthen family life since 1988. Our aim is to promote strong family relationships and to help those who face family difficulties.

For information on the wider work of Care for the Family visit www.careforthefamily.org.uk

Care for the Family
Garth House, Leon Avenue,
Cardiff, CF15 7RG.

 029 2081 0800  mail@cff.org.uk

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Top Tips



For Bereavement

Supporting Bereaved People



It can be difficult to know what to say or the best approach to take when trying to support someone who has recently been bereaved.

Bereavement affects people in different ways, and there is no one way to help, but there are some simple things you can do that can help make a difference

Be there for them

Bereaved people can feel very isolated, particularly when others act awkward or avoid them. They need you to spend time with and talk with them even if you don't know what to say. Be normal and be yourself. They are still the same person they were before their loss, and they need friends around to help them as they grieve. If they have children, remember that they have also suffered a loss, don't ignore them – their grief is valid too.

Take your lead from them

Our different personalities mean that we react in different ways to bereavement. The bereaved person may want to talk a lot about the person who has died and how they are feeling, or they may not want to discuss it at all. Give them the opportunity to talk if they need to, but be willing to put a conversation on hold if it seems as though they are finding it too difficult. You may find that on some days they want to talk about how they're feeling, but at other times they would prefer to focus on other things.

Talk about the person who has died

Don't be afraid to talk about the person who has died, or to share your own feelings of loss and grief. Your friend or family member will love to hear your

memories of their loved one and it will help to take away their feelings of isolation.

Be prepared for honesty

Don't ask them how they are if you only want to hear, "I'm OK thank you." Be prepared for the truth, and be ready to listen to all the jumble of emotions they may be feeling without being judgemental. Be sensitive about visiting and ring first, don't just show up at the door. Although sometimes a visit may be just what they need, be prepared for them to say that they can't cope with company just now.

Offer practical assistance

In the early days they will need lots of practical support with things such as preparing meals, running errands or collecting children from school. Don't wait to be asked for help. Initially they will need help with just about everything as it can be very difficult to function normally or hold to any type of routine. Be specific in the help you can offer.

You may also like to offer help with planning and suggestions for the funeral – this can be overwhelming and confusing, and getting the details right is very important.

Provide ongoing support

There is no set time frame for grieving, so you need to be willing to be there for someone not just in the immediate aftermath of the death, but for the long haul. The weeks and months after the funeral can be very hard, so ongoing support is important. Keep in touch and be available.

Talk about everyday things that matter. Your relative or friend will still be interested in you and perhaps in what

is going on around them, but 'small talk' can seem very trivial. Ask them out to coffee or lunch just to give them a change of scene for a while. Invite them to events and parties, but let them know that you will understand if they feel unable to go or have to leave early.

Bereaved people may not be very good at looking after themselves, so encourage them often to be kind to themselves, making sure they eat healthily, rest, and try to sleep and exercise. Remember that certain dates will be particularly hard for them – holidays, family milestones, birthdays and anniversaries often reawaken grief. Let them know that you are there for them.

