

# How other people can help

## How you can help me - things I wish you knew



Tel: (029) 2081 0800  
www.careforthefamily.org.uk

Do	Don't
<b>Do</b> talk to me – even if you don't know what to say. Knowing that you are sorry is a good start.	<b>Don't</b> avoid me – it hurts so much when you cross the road when you see me coming rather than be willing to face me.
<b>Do</b> keep in touch; keep phoning especially as weeks turn into months and years. Be available.	<b>Don't</b> phone and then say "let me know if I can help".
<b>Do</b> talk about my partner – we love to hear your memories of him/her.	<b>Don't</b> worry about feeling 'awkward' - be normal, yourself, my friend – I am still the same person.
<b>Do</b> think carefully before you speak – I'm feeling quite vulnerable at the moment and insensitivity could pull me down very low.	<b>Don't</b> come out with platitudes, trite answers or comments. Right now, all I want is to have him/her back.
<b>Do</b> listen – it can be more important than what you say. Sometimes I need to know that I am heard.	<b>Don't</b> say things like – " <i>You can always marry again, you're still young.</i> "
<b>Do</b> give practical support. I'm not able to cope with routines at the moment so providing meals, help at home and with my children is vital.	<b>Don't</b> wait to be asked to help – initially there is so much help I need with just about everything.
<b>Do</b> offer specific help – " <i>I'll pick the children up on Friday, take them out, give them tea and bring them back at 6.</i> "	<b>Don't</b> overload me with responsibilities – for a while it will be all I can cope with to get out of bed and get dressed.
<b>Do</b> talk about everyday things <b>that matter</b> as well – I'm still interested in you and what is going on around me, but 'small talk' can seem very trivial.	<b>If</b> you have a faith, don't be super-spiritual, feel you need to quote scripture and pray with me, or have to defend God's case.
<b>Do</b> understand it will <b>take time</b> for me even to begin to adjust to life as it has to be for me from now on.	<b>Don't</b> feel you have to do something – just be there.
<b>Do</b> 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.	<b>Don't</b> ignore the loss, or avoid asking about my partner. Most bereaved people long to talk and talk about the one who has died.
<b>Do</b> be sensitive and aware e.g. Christmas cards – a mention of my partner will let me know that you miss him/her at this time too.	<b>Don't</b> expect me to be over it – I will never get over it, but will find a 'new normal life' in time.
<b>Do</b> remember my children! They can sometimes be neglected as they may not be so willing to talk.	<b>Don't</b> say – " <i>Be strong</i> " – (it means " <i>Don't share your pain, keep it to yourself</i> ").

Do	Don't
<b>Do</b> make allowances for my children's behaviour. It may be very disruptive and difficult. They need lots of patience and love.	<b>Don't</b> forget to give time and attention to my children – I may be struggling with my feelings towards them.
<b>Do</b> invite me out to coffee or lunch – just to change the scene for a while.	<b>Don't</b> tell me that you've been too busy to phone or get in touch. Better to say "we didn't know what to say".
<b>Do</b> still invite me to events and parties, but understand if sometimes I feel unable to go or have to leave early.	<b>Don't</b> avoid the issue publicly - in schools, in churches etc.
<b>Do</b> remember that appearances can be deceptive – I may look as if I'm coping okay, but inside I may be falling apart.	<b>Don't</b> ask how I am if you only want to hear, "I'm okay, thank you." Be prepared for the truth!
<b>Do</b> remember that there is no time limit on grief – it will go on long after others expect. Please walk that road with me.	<b>If</b> you have a faith, don't just say, "I'm praying for you." – be prepared to be part of the answer by getting involved.
<b>Do</b> find ways to remember the anniversaries that the family will appreciate – be creative, I appreciate others' ideas.	<b>Don't</b> be afraid to show your emotions, cry with me, and tell me how you feel.
<b>Do</b> be ready to listen to all the jumble of emotions I may be feeling without trying to give answers or being judgemental.	<b>Don't</b> be judgmental of my behaviour, words, actions or attitudes – they will find a proper level in time.
<b>Do</b> be aware that my children may react in ways that seem out of character – they have gone through the worst experience imaginable and may be very frightened and insecure.	<b>Don't</b> 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.
<b>Do</b> show sensitivity – ring first – don't just turn 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.	<b>Don't</b> measure the way I react and the emotions I express by your own expectations or experience. My grief is unique to me.
<b>Do</b> 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.	<b>Don't</b> say you understand how I feel – whatever your loss it will be different to mine as each grief is individual.
<b>Do</b> help with planning and suggestions for the funeral – you could spend months thinking of a wedding and just days for a funeral. The details are very important.	<b>Don't</b> think that "he/she's still got many years of life ahead of him/her". The life I was living and planning is over. I need to adjust to that first before thinking about the future
<b>Do</b> encourage me to be kind to myself and not push myself to meet other peoples' expectations of how I should be.	<b>Don't</b> try to find something positive in my partner's death.
<b>Do</b> let me know that you share my sense of loss and that you miss my partner too. This can take away isolation and be a great support.	<b>Don't</b> think that death puts a ban on laughter. Remembering and enjoying the times we had together is important and helps me to heal.