

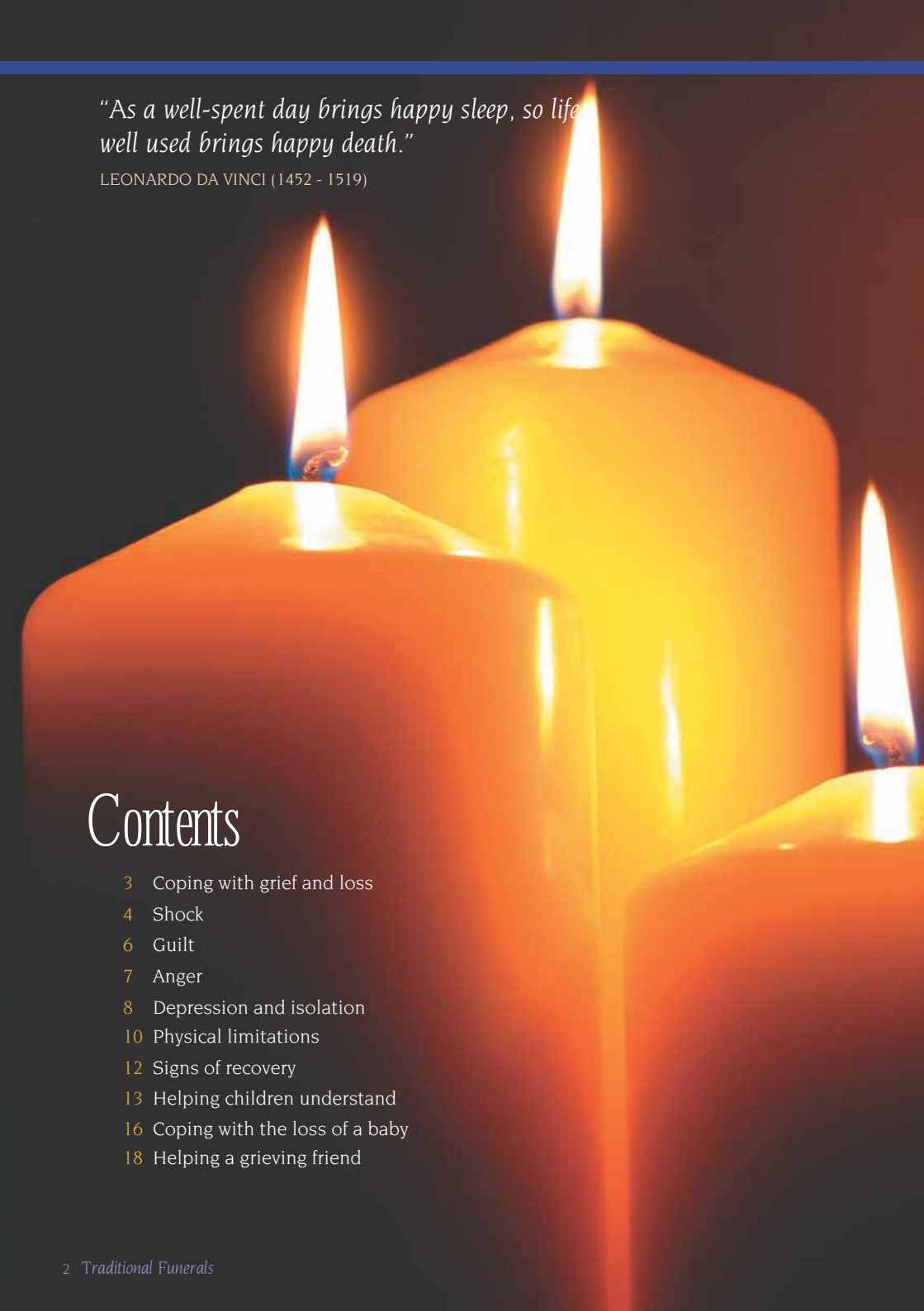


GREGORY  
& CARR  
FUNERALS

YOUR GUIDE TO

*Grief and Loss*





*“As a well-spent day brings happy sleep, so life well used brings happy death.”*

LEONARDO DA VINCI (1452 - 1519)

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## COPING WITH

# *Grief and Loss*

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We empathise with you and hope this booklet will help you, and those close to you, cope with your grief and assist with your eventual recovery. If it can help you alleviate the sadness you are feeling right now, even in the smallest way, it will have achieved its purpose.

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Each person experiences grief in their own way. From initially being understandably shocked and numb, grief can progress to a point where you feel totally out of control.

Very strong emotions are a normal part of grieving and sometimes your ability to effectively deal with grief depends of your willingness to accept and move through the emotions you are experiencing. there is no right or wrong way to deal with these emotions. if only it were that easy.

The methods that work for one person may not work for someone else. Gender, age and social environment will also influence how you deal with grief.

This booklet is not designed to tell you how to react (nor can it), but to help you deal with some of the overwhelming feelings you may experience. It explains some of the emotions and stages you may face when grieving and provides some helpful tips to cope with them.

It's important to remember that it takes time and nurturing to heal.

*“The fact that something has happened to a million other people diminishes neither grief nor joy.”*

UNKNOWN

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# Shock

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When someone you love dies, you are inevitably thrown into a state of shock. You can become immobilised and engulfed by sadness. If the death is sudden, you are often stunned and disbelieving and unable to eat, sleep and concentrate. These emotions are quite normal.

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It is important to respond to your feelings to help the healing process. Repressing these feelings may take care of other people, but is not in your best interest. A grieving person often spends too much time worrying about how their grief impacts on other people. Go with your feelings - there is no right or wrong and whatever you feel is okay. It is your right to honour your feelings and personal needs.

### **Our observations and recommendations**

- Remember, you are the person who needs to be taken care of - don't worry about others.
- Take part in healing activities such as releasing emotions and crying.
- Avoid situations which create stress and pain, including insensitive people.
- Be honest with yourself and others.
- Follow your instincts. You know what will heal you better than anyone else.

*"We are healed of a suffering, only by experiencing it to the full."*

MARCEL PROUST





## Advice for supporters

- The bereaved often have their pain intensified because people – albeit with the best intentions – feel they need to give advice to take away the grief. You may have their best interests at heart, however you can do more harm than good.
- Do not tell a bereaved person that you know how they are feeling. Let them tell you, in their own time, how they feel.
- Think before you speak. How would you feel in the same situation?
- Simply acknowledge your feelings of sorrow and sadness at their loss.

## Emotional release

Releasing your emotions aids healing. How each individual comes to terms with strong emotions is usually related to their normal behavior. It's unlikely that a highly controlled person will suddenly become openly emotional.

There is no appropriate release, no proven formula - it's whatever works for you. A female release might be quite different to a male release and a young child's totally different from a teenager. It's perfectly okay and indeed natural to get angry, cry, work out, listen to music, write, smash dishes, shout, share, reminisce, cuddle articles of the deceased's clothing or do anything else that ultimately helps you to feel better and does not harm anyone else.

However, be cautious about using substances like alcohol to escape your feelings. dulling your feelings will only bury them deeper. the only way out of grief is straight through it.

## Our observations and recommendations

- If someone is embarrassed by your grief and emotional release, it is their problem, not yours.
- Express your feelings with those who will support you.
- Grief comes and goes. You may feel sad one minute and happier the next.
- Grief is unpredictable. You may be engulfed by sadness when you least expect it. unfortunately you cannot control grief.
- There is no way of knowing how long or intense your grief will be. You just need to work through it and take whatever time is needed.
- Individuals deal with emotions in different ways. do whatever it is that helps you deal with your grief.
- Avoid making major changes or rash decisions until you come to terms with your grief.

## Advice for supporters

- A grieving person needs support, not advice. Listen to them without judging them or trying to diminish their pain.
- The most effective support is just being there. Accept that they may feel or express their emotions differently to you. this is how they are handling their loss.

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# Guilt



It is common to blame yourself or others for the death of your loved one. "If only" scenarios may cross your mind, particularly the poignant, "If only I'd had the chance to say goodbye".



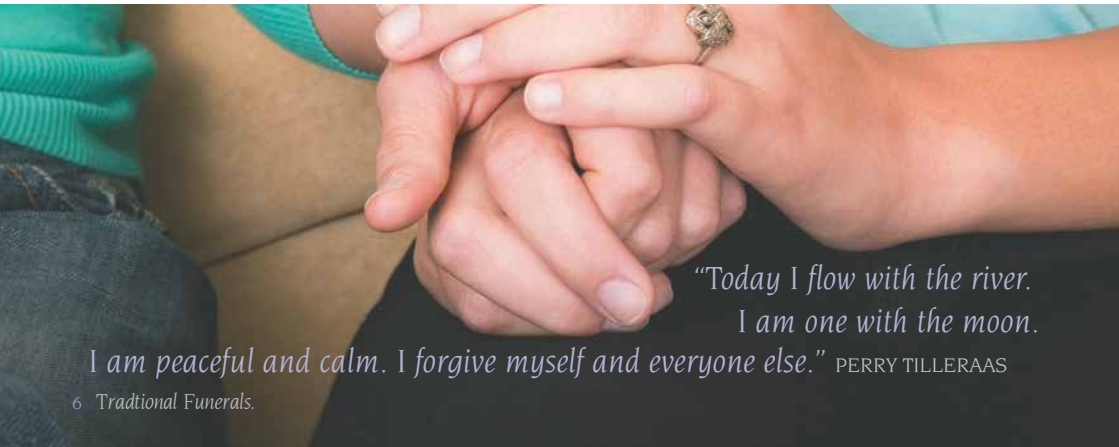
Wishing to have done more or done things differently is normal - you're definitely not alone there. nor should you be alone now. Accepting and exploring these feelings with a sensitive friend or trained counselor is usually helpful.

### **Our observations and recommendations**

- Talk or think through how things might have been different. But do not beat yourself up over it. Your loved one would never have wanted that. remember, you usually see things more clearly in hindsight.
- Seek professional guidance if you cannot let go of your guilt.

### **Advice for supporters**

- Do not confront guilt with logic, as the two have nothing in common. Have an open ear, accepting heart, and refrain from passing judgement.
- Allow the bereaved to express what they would have done differently.
- Watch them closely for signs of severe depression – do not let them do anything silly.



*"Today I flow with the river.  
I am one with the moon.*

*I am peaceful and calm. I forgive myself and everyone else."* PERRY TILLERAAS

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# Anger

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Many people feel angry and sometimes betrayed by the person who died.

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It is important not to bottle up this anger as it can drain your energy and be expressed in damaging ways.

Find a safe and effective way to let it out. If friends and family are not comfortable with your anger, consider seeking professional guidance.

### **Our observations and recommendations**

- Remember, only you can make yourself angry, no one else.
- If you feel angry, find an acceptable way to let it go such as exercising or crying. Anger can be very useful if used constructively.

### **Advice for supporters**

- Always bear in mind, the person is not angry at you – don't take it personally.
- Not everyone is comfortable with anger. only offer support if you can deal with this emotion.



*“Anger repressed can poison a relationship as surely as the cruelest words.”*

JOYCE BROTHERS





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# *Depression & Isolation*

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You may become depressed and disinterested in what is happening around you or experience an overwhelming sense of loneliness.

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It is important to share your feelings and memories of the deceased with someone who cares and let them know how much you hurt. Prolonged isolation and depression is unhealthy and should be discussed with a medical practitioner or counsellor as a matter of priority.

## **Our observations and recommendations**

- Keep in contact with those who are supportive and understanding of your grief. trust your family and friends.
- When you are ready, seek people or activities to help your healing process. Sometimes your grief opens new doors and experiences. Trust your instincts.

## **Advice for supporters**

- Respect the wishes of the bereaved and allow them to return to social life at their pace. Activity is good, but not necessarily good for everyone.
- Be sensitive that things have changed for them and they may not fit into old circumstances easily.
- Respect that they may have new needs that require different social situations.

*“Although the world is full of suffering it is full also of overcoming it.”*

HELEN KELLER



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# *Physical Limitations*



Grief can cause insomnia, headaches, low energy and poor appetite as well as intensify any existing physical problems. During grief, do not expect your body to function at peak levels, as it is vulnerable and susceptible to illness. Be kind to yourself and remove as much stress from your life as possible



The emotional wound you are carrying requires the same care and time you would allow a physical wound. Your body needs proper food, light exercise and a bit of self-indulgence.

### **Our observations and recommendations**

- You are more susceptible to physical problems while grieving, so seek medical advice and attention if necessary.
- Medication will not cure an aching heart. trust that your body will recover from the pain.
- Accept practical help that will make life easier for you.

### **Advice for supporters**

- Be sensitive to emotional pain. An aching heart may not be visible but it will influence the physical stamina of the bereaved. Treat them with the same tenderness you would show someone who was injured.
- A bereaved person rarely asks for practical help because they believe it shows they are not coping. in today's society emotional help is also highly recommended.

*“When you are sorrowful look again in your hearts and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which had been your deepest delight.”*

KAHLIL GIBRAN

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# *Signs of Recovery*



How quickly or slowly you will recover is not predictable. When you start to feel better, the painful feelings begin to subside and you want to get on with your life, then you are recovering.



Often, just when you think you are making progress, you feel a set back for no apparent reason. usually this is due to a date stamped somewhere in your memory - anniversaries, birthdays and special occasions relating to the deceased or something that triggers a memory. However, the intensity of your grief will not last forever, even though the memories will linger, as they should.



### **Our observations and recommendations**

- Grieving gives you the time to recover from your loss - only you know what this recovery entails. Accept that you need time to heal, but if you feel you are not making any progress please seek help.
- Do not feel you are betraying or forgetting your loved one. this is a normal reaction, but you are not expected to grieve forever. Your memories will live on and they will always live in your heart.
- An anniversary of the death and other special occasions can often create great anxiety. Plan ways to cope with the day, but change your plans at the last minute if they no longer feel appropriate.

### **Advice for supporters**

- Each individual heals in their own time and in their own way, so don't comment if you think it is taking too long. or too short for that matter. they will know when it is time to stop grieving.
- If you remember the anniversary of the deceased or other special occasions, sensitively let the bereaved know that you are thinking of them - preferably a few days before. This gives them an opportunity to share how they are feeling.



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# Helping Children



Many parents are not sure how to explain death to a child. Either fearing the child won't understand or cope, or in an attempt to protect the child, they may believe it is easier to avoid the issue.



Children are capable of experiencing grief and they can often accept death better than many adults. Importantly, they also need the opportunity to grieve and to say goodbye to a loved one.

### **Important considerations**

As a general guide, the most important things you can do to help children understand death are:

- Accept and acknowledge their feelings
- Listen to them
- Reassure your love for them

It is important to tell children the truth in words they can understand as soon as possible after the death has occurred. Avoiding the topic of death and funerals may result in the child developing unwarranted fears.

Generally the amount of interest the child shows is a gauge of their readiness to be told of an issue such as death. This will usually be expressed through the questions he/she asks.

### **Different ways for different ages**

#### **Up to six years**

Children under the age of six are not usually able to relate to the finality of death and are unable to express in detail how they feel. Intuitively they understand that something is different and may display their grief in behaviour changes. For example, they may get upset or be unusually fearful.

While it may be difficult for a child of this age to understand death, they will sense the sadness and feel upset. Very young children will need to be reassured, listened to and comforted.



## **Ages six to ten**

From this age, children start to see death as final and become curious about the details of the funeral and death. Try to answer their questions honestly and as fully as you can.

They will also feel loss, pain and grief as they realise that someone they knew and loved will not be there anymore. It is important to tell them that their reactions are normal and it is all right for them to talk about their feelings, release emotions and cry. Let them know you are always there if they need you.

Stories, which match their experiences, or play time, where they can express their emotions, are very therapeutic. Trust that they understand the significance of their loss and treat them with warmth, reassurance, sensitivity and creativity. This will not only help the child, but help you too.

## **Teenagers**

Teenagers may find it difficult to cope if someone close to them dies and they often start to search for meanings and values. While you should engage them to talk about their feelings, do not force the issue. Try drawing them into discussions by asking their opinion or advice and by listening. Telling them interesting anecdotes about the person's life is always a good ice-breaker.

It is important to let them work out their feelings in their own time, but let them know you are there. Some teenagers may find it easier to talk to someone outside their immediate family such as a friend or relative. The important thing is that you are there for them.

Generally, teenagers find it very difficult to cope with death. their whole outlook is about living on the edge and surviving - not dying. therefore, it is important to let them work out their feelings in their own way and in their own time.

Providing opportunities for free expression of their opinions will help, but do not expect a teenager to talk freely about what they feel.

### **Should children attend the funeral?**

Children should be encouraged, but not forced, to attend the funeral as an opportunity to say goodbye and experience the grieving process. A funeral is a celebration of a person's life after all. explain the funeral service a few days before and if they decide to attend, consider having them involved in the service in some way. Let them decide the extent of their participation.

### **If you don't know the answer**

Sometimes children ask tricky questions that you don't know how to answer. when this happens, the best response may be just to listen and show your support.

There are also a number of books written especially for children that may help them gain an understanding of death and funerals.

### **Helping them cope**

Children express their grief in different ways to adults but be prepared to share your feelings. Be honest about why you are sad or lonely and show your feelings through touching and embracing. Encourage the child to talk honestly about the deceased and allow them to express their feelings, cry and re-live memories. Like adults, the grieving process will be painful and will take time to work through.

We recommend telling people who have contact with the child, such as teachers and baby-sitters, if someone close to the child dies. Grief can change behaviour and it may be easier if these people know the reasons for such a change.

It is also important to reassure the child that they are not responsible for the death. encourage them to talk, express what they feel and think about how they may want to say goodbye. There are no hard and fast rules to explain what a child will need or experience. The relationship between the deceased and the child will determine the extent of how the death will impact on their life.

Children usually take the lead from adults around them and mirror their behaviour. Finally, do not underestimate the impact grief has on children.

### **Who can help**

if the child is having long-term problems coping with the death of a loved one, it may be appropriate to organise counselling. We can nominate professional counselors who may be able to help.

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# *The Loss of a Baby*



A difficult time.

Losing a baby can be a confusing and painful time and many parents find it difficult to decide what to do.

Only you will know what is appropriate for your baby.



Some people may suggest a funeral is not necessary, or try to arrange a service on your behalf, but organising your baby's funeral can be an important part of the grieving process. The funeral does not have to be arranged immediately. You may want some time before holding a service.

## **Why a funeral is important**

The funeral service is an important time to acknowledge your love for the baby. It can help you and your family come to terms with the death and support each other in your grief.

We can take care of all the necessary arrangements and help you plan the service and burial or cremation. We can help you organise the certification of the death and arrange for you to receive copies of the certificates if you wish.

## **Ways to remember**

Creating memories of the baby's life can be important to acknowledge the baby's existence and provide a focus for your grief.

It can be helpful to make some special memories of the baby to hold onto.

## **Naming the child**

You may worry that naming your baby may seem morbid or without a purpose. However, giving your baby a name may help you and others recognise the baby as an individual. You may feel more at ease by referring to the baby by name when talking with others or reflecting on what has happened.

## **Viewing**

if you wish we can arrange a suitable time for you to spend time with your baby prior to the funeral service. You may wish to bathe and dress the baby in special clothes. Viewing is optional, but it can help you come to terms with the death.



## Photographs

Many parents ask to have photographs taken of their baby and find that these help capture their memory. Although most parents are grateful for the photographs, others may find they are difficult reminders of their loss.

if you wish, photographs can be taken, kept with the baby's records and collected at a later date.

## Other memories

Apart from photographs you may want to keep other memories of your baby such as a lock of hair or a hand print or foot print.

## Other children

If you have other children it is important to consider they may also feel the grief. Although you may want to protect them from an awareness of death and the pain of grief, you may want to ask your children if they would like to see the baby or be involved in the funeral service.

## Options for the funeral

We can help by suggesting ways to arrange a funeral which is a special recognition of your baby's life.

Some of these ways include:

- A funeral service at our chapel, a church, the graveside or perhaps a family member's home.
- There is the choice between burial and cremation. The cremated remains can be scattered in a special place, perhaps over the ocean or under a rose bush in your garden.
- We can arrange for you to meet with a Minister or Celebrant to discuss the funeral service.
- Some parents prefer to conduct the funeral service themselves.
- According to your special needs you may like music, silence, poetry or bible readings to be included in the service.
- Place something personal such as a letter, poem, a piece of jewellery or a favourite toy with the baby.
- Place a flower from the coffin in a frame.
- Other special touches such as releasing doves or a display of balloons can be organised.

## Support groups and organisations

Support groups such as SANDS (Stillbirth and neonatal death Support), SIDA (Sudden infant death Association) and the Compassionate Friends may be helpful as they allow you to share your experience with others who have had a similar loss.



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# Grieving Friend



Although it may not be as painful as losing a loved one of your own, having a friend who has lost someone they care for can also be difficult for you.



You may not be sure how to react - whether to talk about the death, offer sympathy and assistance, or perhaps leave them alone.

People deal with grief in their own way and each person needs support in different ways. You may consider helping a friend in the following ways:

## **Allow them to express their feelings**

Feeling the pain of the loss is an important part of the grieving process. Any attempt to minimise the hurt that is being experienced can be counterproductive.

## **Just be there**

Let them know you are there if they need you, whether it is to talk, or just to keep them company. Just being there shows you care. Let them know they are not alone in coping with their grief both during and after the funeral.

## **Listen**

encourage your friend to express their feelings and emotions and listen intently. try to understand their moods and let them say what they want to. If they repeat the same story, let them. It is a natural part of the grieving process.



*“For a while when I was getting better, I got mad at myself because I thought it meant I didn’t care anymore that my brother died. Then I realised I was just getting better.”*

BECKY, 15

### **You don’t have to rely on words**

A squeeze of the hand, a touch on the shoulder, or an embrace is sometimes more comforting than words.

### **Offer help**

Offer to help in little ways, whether it is cooking a meal or helping with gardening or laundry. even if they don’t accept your offer they will appreciate your willingness to help.

### **Be sensitive**

Sometimes the bereaved will simply prefer to be left alone. during these times, let the person know you are there if needed.

### **Don’t hide your own grief**

If you were a friend of the deceased you may also be grieving. don’t be afraid to show your emotions. if you feel like crying, do. Your friend will certainly understand and tears can be a way of sharing your experience.

### **Avoid cliches**

Phrases such as “You’ll get over it”, “i know how you feel” and “think of all the good things you still have” often don’t help. if you are uncomfortable expressing condolences it may be better to say nothing at all.

### **Show that you haven’t forgotten**

Remember significant dates such as the anniversary of the death, or the deceased’s birthday or wedding anniversary.

### **Be patient**

Try not to put a time limit on grief. No matter how long it may take for your friend, it is important to continue to provide support.

If required we can nominate support groups or professional counselors who may be able to help your friend effectively manage their grief.



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