



A GUIDE FOR THE GRIEVING PERSON'S LOVED ONES

This guide is for you if you are wondering about the support you can offer to a grieving loved one.

It is an opportunity to reflect on your role and on the words and actions you can take to provide support and comfort.



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YOU ARE CLOSE TO THE GRIEVING PERSON

A person you love is grieving. You may be touched by this situation and you can even be grieving yourself.

Before helping them, it is very important to reflect on the sort of support you can offer, and on your own limitations. Ideally, support should come from several family members, and you should not impose it on yourself to always be there for the bereaved person.

Providing support to a grieving person can make a big difference to them in how they experience their journey. However, this must be done with respect for who you are and what you are capable of.

Thank you for being here!

WHAT IS GRIEF ?

Grief is everything you experience when a person you love dies.

It is a very personal and unique experience. Reactions and needs may vary from one person to another and even from one moment to another within a day. There is no pre-defined way to grieve. Each person must forge their own path.

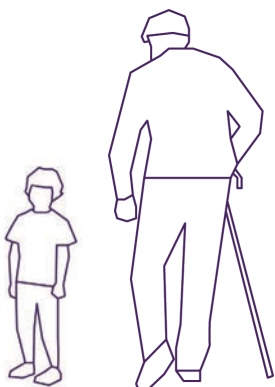
Grieving is learning to live with the absence of the person you love. It lasts a lifetime with varying degrees of intensity.

ACCEPT THAT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GRIEVING PERSON MAY CHANGE FOR A WHILE

When you see someone who is grieving, it's important to understand that they are on a roller coaster and they will sometimes feel like no one can really understand them.

Don't pressure them to be the way they used to be and to do what they used to do. Be kind to them and accept that they are different now and that your relationship to them may change.

They don't love you less than before, and they don't lack goodwill, it's just that their life has changed and they need to get their balance and their landmarks back.



HOW DO YOU SUPPORT A GRIEVING LOVED ONE ?

The preferred attitude is to go to the grieving person and not wait for them to come to you. Keep in mind that your loved one is already going through a difficult time and it can be hard for them to seek help. Open your door, initiate discussion and dare to directly address death and grief, topics that are unfortunately still taboo.

For example :

“ I know you are grieving for (*name of the deceased person*). Would you like to talk about it ?”



Ideally, you should open your ears wide to listen well, open your eyes wide to look at each other with confidence and kindness, and open your mouth only when necessary. Also, avoid giving advice.

You can offer different options to your grieving loved one, while respecting your own limits.

False promises or commitments that you cannot keep must be avoided at all costs.

In keeping with the pace and needs of the person, you could offer :

- emotional support and listening.
- routine or daily support: preparing meals, helping with daily tasks, helping children for parents, etc.
- support for death-related procedures: administrative documents.
- respite.
- moments to change their mind or have pleasant experiences.

It is not up to you to decide what is the best support for the person. You can offer, but listening to their needs is the key.

WHEN TO SUPPORT A GRIEVING LOVED ONE ?

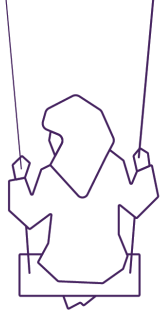
In general, bereaved people feel relatively well together at the time of death and at the funeral, and things get more difficult afterwards. They often feel that the people around them are returning to their "normal" lives quickly, and they feel quite alone in grieving.

It is important to know that the grieving person's need will fluctuate, but will last for weeks, months and even years after the passing.

Do not hesitate to show your presence, even when the time has passed or when the person seems to have regained a certain balance. Sometimes we don't dare to ask the person about their grief because they seem to be well and it's been a while, but appearances can be deceptive!

Don't hesitate to talk about it, because it can make a significant difference to them.






A FEW COMMON BLUNDERS

Sometimes, even with good intentions, relatives can say words that are hurtful to the grieving person.

Here are some examples:

"You should stop looking at pictures or memories, it hurts you too much."	This invalidates the person in their needs and their right to live their emotions.
"You should have started working again, it's already been six months since he died."	This puts pressure on the person and is experienced as a lack of empathy and understanding.
"You have to move on."	This emphasizes the value of moving on, but doesn't acknowledge the person's pace.
"Be strong and keep going."	This trivializes grief and takes away the right to experience difficult emotions. As a result, people may not talk about it because they are afraid to appear weak.
"You have lost a child / brother / sister / friend / parent but at least you have another one." "You've lost a spouse, but you can make a new life."	This minimizes the dead person's importance and implies that the person is replaceable.
"Your loved one wouldn't want you to mourn."	This puts pressure on the person to get better and prevents them from experiencing their emotions.
"You hardly ever saw him, you'll get over it soon."	This trivializes the relationship with the deceased.
"You shouldn't feel guilty / angry / relieved..."	This delegitimizes emotion and implies that some reactions are normal and others are not.
"You have to get over it. He's been dead for a year."	This confines grief to a limited period of time.
"Do that and it'll get better."	This deprives people of expertise about their own condition and impairs their ability to act, as well as their freedom of choice.



In summary...

Accompanying a grieving person properly means being present in time.

It also means listening to their evolving needs and letting them be the expert at what can be useful to them or do them good.

Thank you for caring about the well-being of your loved ones.



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Contact us

If you have any questions or would like more personalized assistance, please contact a Deuil-Jeunesse specialist.

Deuil-Jeunesse is here to support you.

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