



SUPPORTING SOMEONE WHO EXPERIENCES A LOSS

It is common to feel awkward when trying to comfort someone who is grieving. Many people do not know what to say or do.

What to Say

Acknowledge the situation in clear and direct communication. That will show that you are more open to talk about how the person really feels.

Express your concern. Example: "I'm sorry to hear that this happened to you."

Be genuine in your communication. Example: "I'm not sure what to say, but I want you to know I care."

Offer your support. Example: "Tell me what I can do for you."

Ask how he or she feels. Don't assume you know how the person feels on any given day.

Monitor your own emotional state. If you are feeling overwhelmed with your own emotions, it may not be the time to provide comfort.

What to Do

Be there. Even if you do not know what to say, just having someone near can be comforting.

Listen when they want to talk. Accept whatever feelings are expressed rather than advising the person about how to cope with the loss. Don't be afraid to bring up the subject for fear of making the person feel worse. Your concern validates that their loss was significant.

Provide reassurance without minimizing the loss. Try to empathize with the person without assuming you know exactly how they feel.



Offer to help with errands, shopping, housework, cooking, transportation, or lawn care. Although they may reject your offer, remember they are not rejecting you or your friendship.

Avoid telling the person "You're so strong." This puts pressure on the person to withhold feelings and continue to act "strong."

Continue to offer support even after the initial shock wears off. The person may not have the energy to call you. Recovery takes a long time.

Check in with the person on anniversaries of the loss, or other important dates. These times can be especially difficult.

Learn about the grieving process. There are many good books available at local bookstores and in libraries.