

Caring for someone who is grieving

Being there during grief

When a friend or loved one experiences loss, it's instinctive to want to help them. But caring for a grieving person can be challenging. Knowing how to be there for them while looking after yourself is important. It's also important to remember that while all the care in the world won't undo their grief, you can support them as they work through it.

Supporting a grieving person

Recognise their pain and loss

People need their grief to be witnessed. Life is full of ups and downs and it's important to be there to witness both. If you can, attend the funeral, memorial or farewell ceremony to show you witness their sadness and grief. And in the months after, gestures such as flowers, a message, or a visit is an easy way to show you still acknowledge what's happened to them.

Offer steady support

Consistent and thoughtful support means taking some of the burden of decision-making onto yourself. Instead of asking the grieving person what they need, ask others in their support system or decide the best course of action for yourself.

Talk about it

It can be daunting to find the right thing to say but you should always try, even if you don't get it right. If you're lost for words, remember to avoid platitudes and say things you truly mean. Instead of saying "Time heals all wounds", you could be more honest and say "I can't imagine what you're going through".

Expect the unexpected

All experiences of grief are different and it's not unusual for grieving to include bursts of anger, anxiety, guilt, and shame. Reassure them that whatever they feel is normal and doesn't need to be justified or explained.

Remain by their side

Grief can play out unevenly. Remember that while the grieving person might seem better, their feelings can change day-to-day. Stay with them, it might be months or even years later that they need you the most.

Tips for looking after yourself

Be kind to yourself

Understand your limits and be strict about your boundaries. If you feel overwhelmed, or like their dependence on you is too much, remind yourself that your grief isn't yours.

Keep moving

Staying active can help your physical and mental resilience and may even be a good activity to do with the grieving person.

