

HOW TO UNDERSTAND AND HELP IN GRIEF?

PART II

III. DIRECTIONS HOW TO BE *THE MOST EFFECTIVE HELPER*

Don't walk in front of me...I may not follow. Don't walk behind me...I may not lead. Walk beside me-and just be my friend. Albert Camus

A. Be a real friend: *a 'sacrificial friend' is a friend who empties himself to serve others*

B. Create the 'safety' to speak about the event and to express feelings that are uncomfortable

1. Too many subjects are treated at taboo - death is one of them!
2. Grievors feel embarrassed about their own thoughts and hesitate to share them for fear of rejection or judgment
3. Encourage or make it safe for crying

C. Initiate the conversation by acknowledging what has happened

D. Remember that they don't need your wise advice but your listening love

1. Grievors share not because they are looking for advice
2. Grieving people like to talk about 'what talks all day within in circles'
3. When grieving people share, they share chaotic

E. Don't worry about mutual silences in your visits with grieving people

1. Job's friends helped the most when their mouth remained shut!
2. Your presence and compassion are important but not your words
3. Listening doesn't mean *I need to say something back when they stop talking*
 - Miller: *The purpose of your talk is to invite talk!*

F. Listen without judging who or what you hear

1. Grievors say (many) wrong things
2. Acceptance of their feelings *validates the reality of their struggles – builds trust*

G. Help grievors to speak by using 'active listening techniques'

1. Reflective listening 'restates what they said'
2. Why is listening so difficult?

H. Share your stories and memories of the deceased or suffering

1. Make memories worth remembering

I. Bury all clichés!

J. Realize that each situation and each person is unique

1. You have ‘never been in their shoes’ because each person is unique
2. Avoid any statement that tends to minimize or invalidate grief even if they may be truths

K. Don’t forget the children

1. They are poor talkers but love a good game
 - a. use pictures with the very young
 - b. use ‘six feelings’ or ‘six faces’ techniques with older children

L. Sympathy is also doing things

1. Offer specific and practical help in the early stages
2. Mark birthdays, anniversaries, special dates ... *even years later!*

M. Remember that grief is never over; it erupts less often

N. Be supportive but watch for over-dependence

O. Suggest anyone to write in a journal

P. Allow the griever his or her privacy: don’t invade their space if not desired!

Q. Provide and maintain routine with clear and normal expectations yet remain flexible

S. Help someone who isn't coping well to find professional help.

IV. CONCLUSION: The tree stump in the back garden!

After Credo Loss

I need to talk about my loss.
I may often need to tell you what happened
or to ask you why it happened.
Each time I discuss my loss, I am helping myself
face the reality of the death of my loved one.

I need to know that you care about me.
I need to feel your touch, your hugs.
I need you just to be with me (and I need to be with you.)
I need to know you believe in me and in my
ability to get through my grief in my own way.
And in my own time!

Please don't judge me now
or think that I'm behaving strangely.
Remember I'm grieving. I may even be in shock.
I may feel afraid. I may feel deep rage.
I may even feel guilty. But above all, I hurt.
I'm experiencing a pain unlike any I've ever felt before.

Don't worry if you think I'm getting better
and then I suddenly seem to slip backward.
Grief makes me behave this way at times.
And please don't tell me to get on with my life.
(I'm probably already saying this to myself.)
What I need most is time to grieve and recover at my pace.

Most of all, thank you for being my friend.
Thank you for your patience. Thank you for your caring.
Thank you for helping, for understanding,
Thank you for praying with me.
And remember, in the days or years ahead,
after your loss – when you need me
as I have needed you – I will understand
And then I will come and be with you.
Barbara Lestrang

LISTEN

When I ask you to listen to me and
you start giving advice you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel
that way, you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have something to
solve my problems, you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I ask is that you listen. Not talk or do – just hear me.
Advice is cheap: a few dollars will get you both Dorothy Dix and Dr
Spock in the same newspaper.

And I can DO for myself; I'm not helpless. Maybe discouraged and
faltering, but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself,
you contribute to my fear and weakness.

But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel, no
matter how irrational, then I quit trying to convince you and can get
about the business of understanding what's behind this irrational
feeling. And when that's clear, the answers are obvious and I don't
really need advice.

So, please, listen and just hear me, and if you want to talk, wait a
minute for you turn; and I'll listen to you. *Nameless*