

Supporting a Friend Through the Loss of a Loved One

When a friend loses someone close to them, it can be hard to know how to respond. Grief can bring on several stages of emotions, including feelings of shock, denial, guilt, anger, and/or depression. Often, these typical stages of grief happen in progression. However, some people may skip over a stage; some may be in a stage only briefly; and others may remain in one stage for a long period of time. By understanding that a friend who is grieving may be experiencing a range of emotions, you may be better able to empathize with what he/she is going through.

The suggestions offered below can help you support a friend who has experienced a loss. Depending on the closeness of your relationship, you may adapt these suggestions to a level that is comfortable for you.

Be Sensitive

Be cautious with your word choice when speaking to the griever. Although well-intended, expressions such as “I understand” and “I can imagine what it’s like” may not help, as loss and grief are different for each person. A simple “I’m sorry to hear of your loss” or “I’m thinking of you” are good ways to communicate your condolences. You may also want to write a special note to show you care.

Be a Good Listener

Listening can be the best way to comfort a grieving person. If you feel you can be a good support to your friend, let him or her know you’re available. If your friend comes to you to talk, allow plenty of time and privacy so there is no sense of urgency during your visit. Let go of any expectations about what is supposed to be said, and just listen.

Be Encouraging

Encourage the bereaved to care for him/herself. It is important that your friend attends to his/her own physical needs, postpone any major decisions, and allow him/her the time to grieve and recover. It is also important to acknowledge and accept your own limitations, and realize that your friend’s situation may be easier with the help of outside resources. You may want to inform your friend that resources are available to assist him/herself in this difficult time.

Resources Are Available

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at www.MagellanHealth.com/member. You can also call us for more information, help and support. Providers are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.

This document is for your information only. It is not meant to give medical advice. It should not be used to replace a visit with a provider. Magellan Health Services does not endorse other resources that may be mentioned here.