

Helpful Things to Do

“There is no better exercise for your heart than reaching down and helping to lift someone up”.
~Bernard Meltzer~

- Stay in frequent touch
- Be patient-repeat information
- Provide reminders
- Accept changes
- Be completely honest
- Allow survivor to make own choices
- Listen-listen-listen
- Be non-judgmental
- Ask about the victim, use the victim’s name
- Allow survivor to talk about the impact of the trauma
- Allow the expression of anger-rage-frustration
- Encourage expression of sadness: tears are healing
- Offer assistance; practical, emotional or financial
- Give special attention to surviving children
- Offer “after-support”, after the funeral, after the arrest, after the trial, after the first year.....

Helping Those in Grief

Take the Initiative

Don’t merely say, “If there’s anything I can do, give me a call.” Intensely grieving people often don't know or can't ask for what they need. Suggest times you'd like to visit, or ways you'd like to help; and accept their response. If your offer is turned down, try again later; don't give up.

Before the funeral

In the first days and weeks after the murder, offer help aggressively and concretely. The family may not know what you can do to help.

- Offer to notify his family and friends about funeral arrangements
- If media is involved, run interference
- House-sit to prevent burglaries during the funeral and visitations
- Help answering the phone and greeting visitors
- Keep a record of everyone who calls, visits or has been contacted
- Help coordinate the food and drink supply
- Prepare meals
- Offer to pick up friends and family at the airport. Arrange housing.
- Offer to provide transportation for out-of-town visitors
- Help him keep the house cleaned and the dishes washed
- Provide Child care

After the funeral

Support is most needed after a few months. Allow survivors time to talk about their grief and be prepared to listen. Grief shared is grief diminished. Each time a survivor talks about their loss, a layer of pain is shed.

- Prepare or provide dinner
- Offer to help with yard chores such as watering or pruning
- Feed and exercise the pets, if any
- Write notes offering encouragement and support
- Offer to drive or accompany him to the cemetery regularly
- Offer to house sit so he can get away or visit family out of town
- Make a weekly run to the grocery store, laundry, or cleaners
- Help with the Thank You notes and/or other correspondence
- Anticipate difficult periods such as anniversaries, birthdays, holidays and the day of death. On these difficult days, people want to know that their loved ones are remembered.
- Always mention the deceased by name and encourage reminiscing
- Families may be involved for years in legal proceedings. Offer help and support during these critical times.

Above all, just listening and your concern and presence will help. No one has the right to put a limit on grief. It is the only thing we have left of our children and no one can take that from us. Grief does not mean that we are weak or crazy or selfish. It means that we are missing someone that was taken from us.

When a friend is grieving, listen with your heart. Helping begins with your ability to be an active listener. Your physical presence and desire to listen without judging are critical helping tools. Don't worry so much about what you will say. Just concentrate on listening to the words that are being shared with you. Avoid clichés and the temptation to say things such as 'I know just how you feel,' because you don't. Allow your friend to have their own feelings.

Be there to express sympathy. Use words and sentences that convey tenderness and compassion. Mourners identify the following as especially helpful to hear at a time of loss:

I'm sorry.
Words fail me at a time like this.
I want to share your grief any way I can.
This must be very painful for you.
I'm here because I care and want to help.
I am concerned about you and your family.
You will all be in my prayers daily.
I hurt for you.