

What Grieving People Wish You Knew
WVBC Engaging Mental Health with Hope
Breakout Session 3/25/2023

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” II Corinthians 1: 3-4

Point One- *Say Something*

1. It matters less what you say than that you say something .
2. Saying something tells me you know , you care , and you care about me .
3. When someone you love has died, it’s as if a hurdle has been placed between you and everyone person you know. It remains in place until your loss has been acknowledged in some way.
4. Don’t hesitate to approach someone because you think it has been too long . The reality is more likely to be the opposite .

Point Two- *Take the pressure off yourself*

5. There is nothing you can say that will make their loss hurt less .
6. Your purpose in saying something is to enter into their hurt with them.
7. It is not up to you to offer recommendations or solutions .
8. Grieving people are just hoping you will be willing to hurt with them, at least for a little while.
9. What you say depends on: 1) the nature of your relationship with the person, and 2) where that person is in the process of grief.
There is no one size fits all .

The Basics:

10. Let the grieving person take the lead .
11. Discipline yourself to listen more than you talk .
12. It's not up to you to fix all their faulty thinking along the way.
13. Just because the thing you want to say is true doesn't mean now is the time to say it. (*for example: "God is good."*)
14. Let the grieving ones be the first to state their feelings or conclusions ; follow their lead.

Dont's

15. Don't assume you know how someone else is feeling .

Take a **Table Table** break:

Discuss the some of the possibly **complicated feelings** of grief: relief, anger, shame, guilt, dread.

Talk about **wrong assumptions**: examples- that they know their loved one is in heaven; that they are relieved the heavy burden of caregiving is over; that a miscarriage is not as traumatic as losing an older child; the person had a great relationship with their parent, etc.

16. Don't compare the grieving person's loss to your own or to anyone else's.

(Caution- we have to be particularly careful of this when we've had a similar loss).

17. Don't be in a hurry ; grief is more of a marathon than a sprint .

18. Don't make it about you ; the only story that needs to be told is theirs - until you are invited to share yours.

19. Don't "Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart" - STOP yourself if you hear your thoughts starting sentences with: "Well I...", "When I...", "I remember...", "My..."

20. Don't tell them what to do.

(Here's the rub- you may be right! Instead, come alongside to help them figure it out).

21. Don't be put off by tears ; to shed tears to release the tension and get the pain out in the open where it can be dealt with.

(You did not "make them cry; you brought to the surface what was there anyway).

22. Don't assume what they really need is to be cheered up .

23. Don't press for details out of curiosity; **but** be the kind of friend who will listen if they do want to talk about hard moments.

Most of all: Esteem their Grief

24. Grieving people want to sense the person they're talking to recognizes how significant their loss is.

25. They *really* don't want their loss being minimized or dismissed .

(Don't talk about what could be worse).

26. Be comfortable with their sadness.

27. Grieving people need caring, wise, close by friends to talk with them about decisions that need to be made in a time when it is hard to think straight.

28. Offering real comfort means accepting where they are.

29. Your presence over the days, weeks and months ahead is far more valuable than any words you can say.

Table Talk:

Talk over any real life examples (good and bad!) that struck you as you "filled in the blanks."

Discuss ways your church could better help support those who are grieving.

All of this material, and much more, is in the book:

What Grieving People Wish You Knew about what helps (and what really hurts)
by Nancy Guthrie

