

HEARTLINKS GRIEF CENTER

WHAT TO SAY TO SOMEONE WHO IS GRIEVING

It is difficult to find the right words to comfort a grief-stricken friend or co-worker. Some things we say with the best intentions can make a grieving friend feel worse. Grief counselor Marta Felber, M.Ed., author of "Grief Expressed: When a Mate Dies" and herself a widow, offers the following "Do's and Don'ts" for conversing with someone who is grieving.

DON'T SAY:

"I know how you feel." The person in grief may want to scream, "No, you don't! No one knows how badly I feel!"

"Just call me if there is anything I can do." People in deep grief can't think straight or focus. They don't know what they need to do.

"It will get better." Grieving people know this intellectually, but in their heart, they may feel so lost and alone.

"Now, now don't cry." It hurts us to see them cry and makes us sad. But, by telling them not to cry, we are trying to take their grief away.

"Your loved one is waiting for you over there," "God wanted him," "It was God's will," or "God knows best." Imagine how you would feel about God after hearing such comments. Be very sensitive. Know the person's faith, and be in touch with your own.

DO SAY:

"I don't know how you feel, but I care about you and that you are hurting." In this way, we validate their feelings.

"Can I get groceries for you or drive you somewhere you need to go?" It's much more useful to offer specific help. Other suggestions: Invite your friend to lunch or dinner, help her with medical or tax forms, or help her go through her loved one's belongings, but only when she is ready.

"It must be so difficult for you. I am thinking about you, caring, loving you" (or whatever you can sincerely say). Remember to stay in the present, where the grieving person is.

"Go ahead and cry. It's okay. I'm here." Then sit quietly with them. If you feel like doing so, cry with them.

"You'll be in my heart" or "I will be praying for you," if you sincerely will do this.



For more information,
please call Heartlinks at 618-277-1800.