

HELPFUL STATEMENTS & ACTIONS

Helpful Statements

I'm so sorry.

I'm sad for you.

I've been thinking about you.

What can I do for you?

Do you feel like talking?

Are there others you want near?

Take all the time you need.

Tell me what you are feeling/thinking.

Tell me about (name). What was he/she like?

What do you remember the most?

Even though we knew the end was near, it still hurts to lose him/her.

I'm here for you. I'm here to listen.

How long were you together?

Would you like some time alone or would you like me to sit with you?

I'm at a loss to know what to say, but I sense how difficult this must be for you.

Helpful Actions

Listen more than you talk.

Allow for silence.

Answer questions honestly, keeping in mind that some questions don't have an answer.

Call back when you say you will.

Refer to the deceased by name.

Allow bereaved to express their feelings and tell their story.

Encourage the bereaved to be patient with themselves.

Ask about other family members.

Include all family members in conversations.

Ask if they have any special requests of you.

Remember them on special occasions.

See also Unhelpful Statements & Actions

UN HELPFUL STATEMENTS & ACTIONS

Not Helpful Statements

I understand how you feel.
It was God's will.
Death was a blessing.
It happened for the best.
Something good will come of this.
You must be strong, don't cry.
Don't take it so hard.
You will soon get over it.
It has happened. You must accept it.
You have your whole life ahead of you.
You're lucky to have had him/her for so long.
Try to keep yourself together.
You must be relieved.
You must be strong for the others.
At least he/she led a full life.
You can't go on like this. It's not healthy.
Don't cry. Try to get control of yourself.
You're young. There's plenty of time to have children.
I know exactly how you feel.
Things work out for the best.

Not Helpful Actions

Don't dominate the conversation.
Don't pass judgment.
Don't avoid the bereave because of your own discomfort.
Don't change the subject when the bereaved talk about their loved-one.
Don't attempt to answer questions that you don't have the answers to.
Don't give advice, particularly medical or legal unless you are qualified.
Don't make suggestions that they received inadequate care.

See also Helpful Statements & Actions