

The Power of Presence: 3 Ways to Support a Friend or Loved One with Traumatic Grief



Watching a friend or loved one grieve the death of someone they love is heartbreaking. Often we feel helpless by our inability to ease their pain and unsure of what to say or do. This webinar will address why individuals grieving a traumatic loss have different needs and how to support those you love during this difficult time. The webinar will examine why it may be difficult to express appropriate sentiments to someone who is grieving, and why our responses are often inadequate.

The following items are key points from the webinar.

How to cope with feelings of helplessness

- Develop a list of Resources – books, groups, therapists
- Ask/Offer:
 - Take out the trash cans?
 - Can I come by after work and walk the dog?
 - Pick the kids up from school? Drop off groceries?
 - Can I come over this weekend and help with the yard?

What do grieving people need?

- Unconditional support and connection
- Acknowledgement and Validation
- Patience and time without expectations
- Targeted assistance to meet grief struggles

The Power of Presence

- Just Be, Listen, and Validate
- Do not try and fix, share, judge, or advise
- Helpful phrases
 - “I am so sorry this happened to you, I am here to listen.”
 - “This must be so hard for you, would you like to talk?”
 - “What are you struggling with the most right now?”

Provide consistent, long term support

- Traumatic grief is long term
- Social support diminishes significantly over time
- Acknowledge anniversaries, holidays & milestones
- Provide a supportive environment where grief talk is welcome and encouraged
- Offer consistent support, even if not accepted
- Don't forget about them after 3 months

Tailor your actions to meet the griever's needs

- Stay present to the needs of the griever
- Question the motivation for your actions
- Ask for guidance
- Direct comfort in and dump out
- Find others to meet your needs

RESOURCES

- **BOOK: There Is No Good Card for This: What To Say and Do When Life Is Scary, Awful, and Unfair to People You Love** (author Dr. Kelsey Crowe - available on Amazon)
- **How to support a Grieving Family Member or Friend: 6 Principles - What is your grief?**
Link: <https://whatsyourgrief.com/support-grieving-family-member-friend-6-principals/>
- **Comfort In; Dump Out - Ring Theory**
Link: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/promoting-hope-preventing-suicide/201705/ring-theory-helps-us-bring-comfort-in>
- **Death Cafe Movement**
Link: <https://deathcafe.com/>