

In the Days After the Death Has Occurred:

- *help with answering the phone*
- *make lists of what needs to be done*
- *bring a meal*
- *do errands and shopping*
- *take care of the children*
- *be a chauffeur to appointments*

In the Months Following the Death:

- *bring and share a meal*
- *take time to listen*
- *help with garden chores or household maintenance*
- *offer some holiday baking*
- *share a regular walk or outing*
- *offer expertise you may have, remember anniversaries, birthdays and special holidays*

When The Bereaved Person Is Ready:

- *help build a bridge to the future*
- *include them in social gatherings with new people*
- *accompany them to new activities*
- *encourage their growing independence*
- *welcome their new friends in your social circle*
- *continue to remember the person who died and talk about them*

We have chosen the image of the labyrinth as a metaphor for the journey through grief. A labyrinth is not a maze as there are no dead ends and no wrong turnings. There is only one way—forward. So it is with grief. The only way through is forward, with many turns and going back and forth over what seems like the same territory. We journey to the centre of our grief, to the centre of ourselves, and then slowly return to re-enter the world.

Each person's experience on the journey of grief will be different. As you journey through your own grief process, there will likely be unexpected turns and insights.



Every labyrinth is unique and special. And all labyrinths help us to move forward and 'through' our grief.



Offering Support to Someone Who is Grieving

Cowichan Hospice

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(closed holidays)

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Cowichan Hospice

Be Genuine By Being Yourself

Your connection with the bereaved person should be a continuation of your usual relationship with them. If you are a close friend, they will want and expect caring contact from you. A bereaved person will not want anyone to assume an unfamiliar intimacy. Your sensitivity and dependability can make a difference to how understood and supported they feel.

Acknowledge The Loss As Soon As You Can After You Get The News

Send a sympathy card with a note of personal condolence. Don't let fear that you won't say or do the right thing hold you back. Simply say that you are sorry to hear of the death, mention the person by name, be willing to listen to what the bereaved person says. Ask how you can be helpful, offer some assistance in a way that feels comfortable for you.

Get Information About Grief So That You Understand the Normal Responses and Phases of Grief

Grief is a natural and necessary process that helps the bereaved person to adjust to life without the person who died.

Listen To The Bereaved Person

Allowing them to talk and to repeat their story will help them to process their thoughts and feelings. Sharing memories of times spent with the person who died can be very comforting for you and the bereaved person. If there are silences, let these be shared moments of quiet without rushing into the gap.

Accept That You Cannot Take The Pain Away

The death of someone important is painful. Trying to 'cheer up' a bereaved person denies the significance and depth of their grief. You can help by allowing the expression of feelings—guilt, sorrow, anger, sadness—without judgment. These feelings are healthy and normal aspects of grief.

Reach out to offer support. Be there by making regular contact over time. Many bereaved people find it hard to reach out or are concerned about being a burden on friends and family. Your initiative in keeping in touch will be appreciated.

Be Patient

Mourning takes time and grief never entirely goes away. The bereaved person will have ups and downs. Be flexible in how you offer support, as the person's needs often change over time. Understand that everyone grieves in their own way and at their own pace.

Make Room for Different Approaches to Grief

Avoid criticizing how someone is grieving; you cannot know what is best for them. Most often a person's strengths, coping mechanisms and network of family, friends and acquaintances are sufficient to sustain them through their grief. Encourage them to take care of themselves by getting help from professional resources such as their minister, doctor, or a counselor.

Expect that Your Own Grief May Be Triggered

These feelings may be related to this loss or a previous loss you have experienced. You may wish to share things that were helpful to you in your own grieving. Be sensitive to the right time to share your own feelings and experiences. Ask yourself if what you are about to say will be helpful to the person.

