

SUPPORTING FRIENDS OR FAMILY WHO ARE GRIEVING

The Sibling Connection

When people are grieving, know that all emotions are often heightened.

- Acknowledge all feelings. Their grief reactions are natural and necessary. Do not pass judgment on how “well” they are or are not coping.
- Understand and accept cultural and religious perspectives about illness and death that may be different from your own. For example, if a family has decided to remove a loved one from life support, do not second guess this decision; try to be supportive.
- Be specific in your willingness to help. Offer assistance with chores such as childcare or meals. For example, suggest “I’ll bring dinner on Thursday, how many people will be there?”
- Identify friends who might be willing to help with specific tasks on a regular basis, such as picking up the kids from school or refilling prescriptions.
- Acknowledge that life won’t “feel the same” and the person may not be “back to normal.” Help the person to renew interest in past activities and hobbies, when they are ready, or discover new areas of interest. Offer suggestions such as, “Let’s go to the museum on Saturday to see the new exhibit,” but be accepting if your offer is declined.
- Know and accept that how your friend or family member copes with their loss may be very different from how you would cope, even in the same situation.
- There is no right way to grieve and mourn. Be very careful not to impose your expectations on someone else, no matter how much you think it might “help.”