



My Hope PathSM

Journeying through grief toward hopeSM

In Times of Grief Helpful Things to Say . . . What to Avoid Saying . . .

INTENT > You Care and Are Willing to be Supportive

HELPFUL | SUPPORTIVE

Show up to support. You don't need to have the right words, just a willingness to be present.

Text periodically. They can respond if/when convenient.

NOT HELPFUL | UNSUPPORTIVE

Not showing up or supporting. (No calls or texts, no visit, not attending services; not sending card or flowers.)

INTENT > Acknowledge Loss and Grief.

HELPFUL | SUPPORTIVE

I suspect things are really tough and feel overwhelming for you.

It's impossible to truly be prepared for the intensity of grief.

Give yourself permission to feel however you feel.

NOT HELPFUL | UNSUPPORTIVE

How are you doing?

When will you be back to work?

You should focus on good memories.

You're lucky she died at 85. My Mom died at 65.

INTENT > Talk About the Deceased Person.

HELPFUL | SUPPORTIVE

Say the deceased person's name.

One of my fondest memories is . . .

What's the greatest thing he taught you?

NOT HELPFUL | UNSUPPORTIVE

Referring to deceased person as loved one, husband, etc.

Avoiding the griever when you see them in public.

INTENT > Desire to Help.

HELPFUL | SUPPORTIVE

I am willing to help in any way . . .

I will call you tomorrow to see how I can help . . . We all need help at times like this . . .

Be specific in offering to help. Can I bring you dinner on Thursday?

I will pick up Jason from soccer practice on Tuesday evening.

NOT HELPFUL | UNSUPPORTIVE

Call me if I can do anything!

Telling them what to do/how to cope: You just need to stay busy!

You just need to get back to work and into a routine.

You should go through their stuff and donate it ASAP so you don't have to keep looking at it.



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INTENT >

Offering Support and Comfort.

HELPFUL | SUPPORTIVE

I am truly sorry for your loss and I wish I could ease your pain and grief.

I wish I had just the right words for you . . . but I don't. Please know I care.

There is nothing I can say to ease your pain and grief right now; please know I love you and will do anything I can to help you.

I will miss Susan . . . especially seeing her walk your dog every evening. She would always stop to chat.

NOT HELPFUL | UNSUPPORTIVE

Cliches:

God never gives us more than we can handle.

God needed another angel.

God called her home because she finished what He needed her to do here.

Everything happens for a reason.

They are in a better place.

They lived a long life.

Many people die young.

INTENT >

Providing Ongoing Support.

HELPFUL | SUPPORTIVE

Send your sympathy card 3-4 weeks after the death (when the cards suddenly stop coming).

Make note of important dates (survivor's birthday; deceased's birthday, wedding anniversary, death anniversary).

Send a card, text or flowers on special dates and during holidays, especially the first year following their loss.

Continue to send periodic cards and texts to let them know they remain in your thoughts and prayers.

NOT HELPFUL | UNSUPPORTIVE

Avoiding addressing, acknowledging, or bringing up the loss.

Avoid evaluating their coping: "You are doing better than I thought you would" or "You are taking this harder than I thought you would."

When do you think you will start dating?

At least you have another child(ren) or [family members].



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