

Help with the Practical

We all have practical skills that we can share. Make a specific offer to help someone with the day-to-day details. Consider if you can help with food, transportation, child care, basic household activities, or something else.

Remember and Share Stories

When there is a death, offer your own memories about the deceased. Help to honor someone's memory and legacy through the stories you share.

Give Space

Sometimes people need space to process and to grieve on their own. Check in occasionally, but honor requests for personal time.

Acknowledge and Process Your Own Grief

Another person's grief can trigger your own. Be mindful in conversations when and if you share your own experience of grief. Take time to care for yourself while you are providing care for another.



Be Present

As you are able, show up! Grief can feel isolating. Being present can be powerful for the one grieving. Visit, take a walk, have coffee, call, attend a service.

COMFORT THOSE WHO MOURN



Listen

Listen as stories are shared, concerns are expressed, and emotions are processed. As you are able, remind the person that you are comfortable listening to the difficult parts of grief.

Remove Expectations

Do not expect a particular response or behavior, but rather honor the different ways individuals grieve.

Connect to Community Resources

Depending on what someone needs, share information about local grief support groups, pastoral counseling, hospice services, or a funeral home, and other resources that may be able to help.

You Are Not Alone!

God is present with you and with all who grieve. God accepts our anger, frustration, hurt, and even disbelief. Our personal faith, our church communities, and our practices can be powerful resources as we navigate a death, loss, and our own grief.

Grief is unique for each person and is shaped by many different factors.

Kinds of Death Reactions

Reactions

relief peace
indifference comfort
surprise
fear anger disbelief completion
anxiety
ambiguity
uncertainty shock
loneliness
despair
frustration
guilt
numbness

There is no right way to respond.
Different people experience different reactions.

A sudden death occurs, often without warning, that can be further complicated by... violence • unknowns • larger world events

Traumatic

Events that can trigger to add to one's experience.
reading a will
burial
clearing space
a diagnosis

Reminders of Grief

Relationships

funeral
moving
birthdays
anniversaries

Was something left unresolved?
Is there a connection to a previous loss?
How long was the relationship?
Was there a connection to an important part of one's life or experience?
Did they provide care for the deceased?

Never assume that you know the extent or nature of someone's relationship.

Was the deceased a parent or mentor? A child or sibling? A member of their family? Part of a chosen family?

How does the death or loss change roles within the family or community?

We experience disenfranchised grief when a loss cannot be acknowledged publicly or openly. This can prolong grief.

Movement of Grief

Grief is not a linear process. Grief can be re-triggered by external events or internal reflection. Early grief may need to be reprocessed at different ages. It can take time to find a safe and supportive community in which someone can process their grief.

Red Flags

While grief is disrupting, make sure that physical needs are being attended and key responsibilities are being met. Is the sorrow overwhelming? Is it leading to anxiety, depression, or insomnia? These are signs that professional help may be needed.

Resources

Money
Plane tickets, funeral costs, lost wages, and legal fees can make grief expensive.

Time
Caring for children, returning to work, and managing practical details can take away time from personal reflection.

Our ability to grieve can be shaped by practical realities.

Social Pressures
Expectations by self and others are for you to return to normal quickly.

Adolescents

Process grief with peers.
Think of death or loss as only adult reality.
Perceive death as an abstract concept until experienced.



Adults

Process grief very differently depending on the situation and personal experiences.



Older Adults

Remember earlier grief.
Acknowledge their own mortality.
Have grief compounded by changes in their community.



How do we understand death?
As we mature, our understanding of death develops and we ultimately understand that death is universal—every living thing dies.
Inevitable—death will happen; we cannot avoid it.
Irreversible—death is final.

Culture

Different communities acknowledge and process death differently.

expected emotional responses or behaviors
particular practices or customs
special services or observations
meaningful colors or symbols
unique prayers or customary readings

