

How do I support my friend after a death?

Let your friend know you care. Friends are an important source of support the person who's experiencing the loss, so it might be nice to let him or her know that you care. You can do this face-to-face, over the phone, or through a card, letter or flowers. If you're dropping by face-to-face, it's a good idea to call first and let the person know you're coming over.

Know what to say. Knowing what to say can be hard. It's O.K. to be honest and let your friend know that you don't know what to say. You might want to start by asking if there's anything you can do to help. Your friend might appreciate knowing that you're around to talk, or if he or she just wants someone to hang out with.

Stay in touch. Keeping in contact can be a way to let your friend know that you're supportive. If you're planning to hang out with other people, ask your friend to come along. Remember that your grieving friend is probably going to cope better in quieter situations, like going to the movies or hanging out at someone's house, rather than huge parties.

Be understanding. Experiencing a loss can cause people to feel lots of different emotions, including anger, sadness and denial. Try to be understanding of your friend's reactions.

Listen. Your friend might want to talk about how he or she is feeling, or about the person who has died. This is often a sign a person is managing grief. Give your friend the chance to talk. Try to be patient if you've heard the stories before; it's not uncommon for people who are grieving to want to go over the same stories a number of times.

It's O.K. if your friend cries. It might be hard to see someone you care about upset or crying. It's O.K. for your friend to cry, and for you to cry as well. This is often a good way to express sadness, and it might help both of you feel better.

Look after yourself. It can be exhausting for you to share a loss with your friend. Taking time out for yourself is important. Do something special for yourself, and make sure you can talk to someone about how you're feeling.

Find help and information. You might be able to help your friend by finding a mental health professional for him or her to talk with or by directing them to someone who does know like a teacher or a counselor. Feel free to pass along the phone numbers below:

National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK(8255)

Your Life Your Voice: 1-800-448-3000

