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FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY: WHAT DO I DO?

Going through grief is incredibly difficult, but so is watching somebody grieve. Many times, people don't know what to do or say, so they do nothing. They may also say "Call if you need anything" or "What can I do?" When we hear this as a bereaved person, the thought of figuring out what we need is too overwhelming, so we simply say "Thanks, I will", knowing that we will never make that phone call to reach out. Below are some ideas to offer when friends ask what they can do. Better yet, give a copy of this to those who ask, so that you don't have to think about it.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GRIEF

- There are no "right" or "wrong" ways to grieve
- Extreme emotions are normal. This includes everything from sadness to giddy laughter
- Everyone grieves differently

DO SOMETHING, SIT THERE

In the vast majority of situations, people who are grieving simply need to be heard without judgment. You may not know exactly what to say, *THAT IS OK*. When in doubt, say nothing. Simply listen. Hold a hand, touch a shoulder, or hug them if it feels appropriate.

FOLLOW THE GRIEVING PERSONS LEAD

- When in doubt, be honest. "I want you to know I care, but I don't know what to say." is just fine.
- Let them know that if they want to talk about the deceased it's ok, and if they don't want to talk about the deceased that's ok too. Let them direct the conversation.
- You may feel uncomfortable, but do your best to make the bereaved person comfortable. Listen. Use the name of the person who died when referring to them.





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FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY: WHAT DO I DO? (CONTINUED)

HOW DO I KNOW IF THEY'RE DEPRESSED RATHER THAN JUST GRIEVING?

Everyone grieves differently. However it is true that grief can trigger clinical depression. Be aware that some of the signs listed below may be normal for early stages of acute grief. However, if these behaviors continue for an extended period of time, they may be symptoms of depression.

- Poor self care, such as lack of grooming
- Dramatic changes in weight
- Excessive use of alcohol or other drugs
- Insomnia or constantly sleeping
- Extreme isolation
- Persistent suicidal thoughts.

If you are concerned about a friend, first gently try to encourage them to seek help. If they are unwilling and you are increasingly concerned about their safety, contact a professional healthcare provider. Their personal physician is a good place to start. If you don't have that information, try contacting your physician for suggestions or resources. You may also call Signature Hospice at **541.664.7400**.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER WAYS I CAN BE HELPFUL?

Perhaps you are a person who just has a very hard time dealing with strong emotions. That's ok. When trying to help people you love, follow your strengths. Are you a good cook? Make an exotic dinner and drop it off. Do you have extra financial resources? Purchase movie tickets or a game of golf. Are you great with kids? Take care of little ones for a few hours. The important thing is that you take the initiative. Below are

some suggestions of little things you can do to show you care.

- Walk the family pet
- Mow the lawn or weed the garden
- Run errands or get groceries
- If you notice some household chores need done...do them!
- Have a movie night, invite them over or go to their house
- Go for a walk or shoot hoops together
- Leave an "I'm just thinking about you" message on their phone.
- Encourage getting out and being with others as the person feels ready

You don't need to make grand gestures, just sincere ones. The point is to keep the door of communication open. Accept that there may be a period of time when the bereaved person does not accept your invitations or doesn't call you back. Don't take it personally, and don't give up. If you can simply continue to check in once in awhile, they will begin to reach out to you when they are ready.

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