



## GRIEVING: WHAT IS HELPFUL

- Being able to talk about the person or share memories.
- Taking time for self.
- Enjoying nature.
- Getting physical exercise – walking.
- Public acknowledgement of the loss.
- Rituals to honour deceased.
- Personal belief system or faith.
- Hugs without words.
- Sensitivity to when a hug is not OK.
- Being encouraging to share memories.
- Sharing good times.
- Laughter & humour.
- A simple “I’m sorry” or “I can’t imagine what you are going through”.
- Tears/emotions – going with feelings.
- Helpful funeral directors.
- Meditation.
- Survival techniques such as sleeping pills (in the short term).
- Someone to take charge & provide practical help.
- Talking to deceased in private.
- Friends providing/encouraging opportunity for outings.
- Pets.
- Sunshine/music.
- Hospice support or other support group.
- Purposeful activity.
- Being “listened to” with sincerity, with respect.
- Not being judged or interrupted.
- Screaming in the car or into a pillow.
- Access to helpful information (books).
- Friends bringing prepared foods or being willing to do practical things such as cooking, shopping, laundry, baby sitting, cutting the grass.
- Follow up after a while when all busyness has died down.
- Personal note or letter with or without card at the time and later on.
- Taking it one day at a time or even one hour at a time.
- Singing.
- Grief counselling.
- Having to go on with life (e.g. see to children, work).
- Being given permission to grieve in your own way.
- Celebrating the life of the loved one in a creative way e.g. song, poem, art.
- Receiving an appropriate gift in memory of the deceased.
- Making a charitable donation.
- Being allowed to express self for as long or as often as needed.
- People remembering a year or two down the road.
- Making a memory board of pictures
- Trying to remember the person as they were normally and not just in the last few hours or days.
- Hearing people share memories at the service.
- A friend just being there.
- Wearing deceased’s clothing.
- Being gifted a tree or plant in remembrance.
- Special place to honour memories in the home.
- Making a remembrance book.
- Keeping a journal.
- Distraction for a while.
- Being gentle with self.
- Taking naps.
- Permission to cry



## GRIEVING: WHAT IS NOT HELPFUL

- Predictions of another death (“you better watch Grandpa or he’ll be next”).
- Suggestions that it is time to “get on with your life” or “you should be over it by now”.
- Trying to meet other’s expectations.
- False reassurance (“I know how you feel”).
- People who avoid talking about the loss or who avoid talking to you.
- Not talking about the person who died, or how they died.
- Re: loss of child “well, at least you have other children / can have more children”.
- Being forced to or not being allowed to view the body.
- Well meant advice like “Eat, you’ll feel better” or too much advice or unwanted advice.
- Not caring for self.
- Lack of support (physical and emotional)
- Not being able to say goodbye to the person who died.
- Insensitive phrases (You’re lucky - you have all those good memories, It was probably for the best, count your blessings, She’s in a better place, She lived a good life, She was old, It was only a dog, at least it was quick, there is a purpose to this, You’ll get over it, Time heals, It was their time anyway, He’ll remarry, It was God’s will, Snap out of it, It’s OK, You’re strong).
- Medication that dulls the senses but not the emotional pain.
- People tiptoeing around you.
- Visitors – overstaying their welcome (too exhausted to entertain).
- The memories of the time of suffering before death.
- Quarrelling amongst family members over possessions.
- Disposing of deceased’s clothing or possessions without permission (“we thought it would be easier if we just got rid of them for you”).
- Others being embarrassed by tears.
- Insensitive questions/attitudes/platitudes.
- Incorrect assumptions about the death.
- Others pushing religious beliefs.
- Making decisions too soon.
- Being told how you should feel.
- Being told not to cry.
- No funeral or ritual, or not having any input, or being unable to attend.
- Personal loss stories of the comforter which invalidate pain of griever.
- Not being given space or time to grieve in private.
- Competitive stories to minimize your loss.
- Not acknowledging your own need to grieve.
- Uncomfortable silence.
- Platitudes / clichés.
- Others nitpicking about details.
- As a child, being told “he is sleeping”.
- Losing social contacts because now you are single and not a couple.
- People not visiting because it would “upset them too much” or “because I want to remember them the way they were”.

**Courtesy Nanaimo Hospice Society**