

Top 10 Things Not to Say to Me, and to Say, When I Have Lost a Loved One

1. I know how you feel.

No, you don't! I know you mean well, but no one knows the depth of my grief. What would I appreciate from you? The truth. "I don't know how you feel. I see that you are hurting. Tell me about it."

2. It will get better. Time heals.

I know in my head that it will get better. It can't get worse. But I can only live in the present. Today is when it hurts. Today is where I am. Time stopped when he died. I cannot deal with the future. It might help if you said, "How is it going today? I really want to know."

3. Call if there is anything I can do.

I don't know what has to be done. Everything is a blur. I can't concentrate. Nothing matters. You will need to make the suggestion. I can't. "I want you to come to dinner, with just our family, on Friday evening. I will pick you up at six and call to remind you earlier that day."

4. It is God's will. Try to accept that.

The God I know would not take someone's life. The God I know gives life. The God I know is loving and kind. But where is He now? I could hear you say, "God knows that you are grieving. He cares. He has known grief. Feel His arms around you."

5. I will never forget the day my husband died. It was like this...

It's not that I don't care. I just can't handle your grief and mine at this time. When I am over the worst of this maybe I can listen to your story. Now I need to tell mine because that is where I am. For some unknown reason, I need to tell it over and over. Maybe it is my way of trying to face the reality of his death. You could get me started. "Tell me about the day he died. I want to hear."

6. You must get out and do things. Keep busy.

I did just that in the early days of my grief. I was busy all the time. My friends made sure I had no free hours. I was running, running from my grief. Finally it caught up with me. Some little something set me off and I cried for days. I began to schedule time for my grief work. I found a balance. There was time to accept the offer of a friend, "I would like to come over and look at your picture albums with you. We can cry together."

7. You've got to go through his closets and drawers, the sooner the better.

I am thankful I had better judgment than to take this advice. A close friend knew exactly what to say. "Take your time to decide when you want to deal with his things. It will be comforting to feel them around you. Perhaps you will think of persons who would appreciate having something that was his. You could make a list. The choices are yours. You will know when the time is right to let his things go. I will help you when you are ready."

8. Now, now, don't cry.

I am sad. I try not to cry in front of people because they seem uncomfortable. Sometimes I can't help it. It's like a floodgate that I can't control. I hear "our" song and I have to cry. I see a man who looks and walks like him. I sob in disappointment. I overhear somebody order his favorite dish at our table in a restaurant. I burst into tears and feel so embarrassed. Then I can't seem to stop. I feel an arm around my shoulder, "Go ahead and cry. It's okay. I'll be right here beside you. I may cry with you."

9. You are attractive. You will find somebody else.

I don't want anyone else. I want him back! Don't you understand? To think that way would negate our marriage and life together. It would be a sacrilege. All you need to say is, "It must be so difficult without him."

10. It could be worse. He could have lingered longer.

What does that matter? He's gone. Don't you understand? I did not want him to die. This is worse than his lingering. At least I had him alive then. If only you would hold my hand and let me tell you how I feel. Don't say anything. Just listen, really listen.

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