A GRACEFUL GUIDE TO HELPING A GRIEVING FRIEND

WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY

WRITTEN BY
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I truly am sorry you need this guide. It means someone close to you has lost a piece of her or his heart, and you’re probably feeling that loss, as well. There is no “right” way to grieve or to help a grieving friend/relative. This simple guide is meant to be a place to start.

When I lost my husband suddenly in 2016 it was a surprise to everyone in my circle. It shook all of us. It also helped me realize I was going about it all wrong when it came to helping my grieving friends. These tips are those I’ve learned from my time in the dark depths of grief and those I’ve discussed and heard from my friends who have also lost a spouse, parent or child.

I pray it helps.

XO,
Kimberly

always remember

IT’S OKAY TO NOT KNOW WHAT TO SAY OR DO. START HERE.

Do SAY the deceased loved one’s name.

Do simply sit in silence & cry with the griever.

It’s okay to admit you don’t know what to say, but still wanted to reach out. Your silence & absence hurt more.

Do NOT ask the griever what s/he needs. YOU think of something. Iron clothes for the funeral, get someone to visit the griever’s home for a manicure, or even deliver breakfast or groceries.

DO NOT SAY:

"Be Strong."

"Everything happens for a reason."

"You’ll find someone new."
There's so much to cover when giving advice or guidance on how to support a grieving friend; everyone's journey is unique. Please think of the four topics below as the tip of the iceberg, but know they have been found to be pretty standard for most widow(er)s.

Find additional tips, resources, and grief gifts on the website: StillHis.com

First Few Days
Preparing for the Funeral
First Year
Living with Loss
The First Week

What to do:

- Show up (Do not be afraid to sit in silence and merely provide a bear hug and tissues to the griever)
- Help notify friends and family (*do not post on social media until the immediate family has been notified)
- Call employer(s) -- the griever’s and for the deceased loved one
- Provide and/or help arrange childcare
- Ensure pets are walked and fed
- Provide food, snacks, and water
- Physically clean and help organize the house
- Take out the trash (remove bags from bins inside the home & take to curb on trash day)
- Visit, but do not overwhelm the griever. Don’t stay too long unless you are a close relative or friend. If possible, try to stagger visits.
Preparing for the Funeral

How to help a grieving loved one bury a loved one

PREPARING FOR THE FUNERAL

WHAT TO DO:

- Make sure the griever is eating *something* and staying hydrated
- Help make calls & set up an appointment with the funeral home
- Drive griever to appointments and sit with her/him
- Take notes (during appointments and of those who sent food, flowers, and gifts)
- Help organize and plan funeral details (i.e. who is involved, location, program, etc.)
- Help find photos and information for the funeral program
- Organize repast
- Find someone to watch/check on the house if funeral will take place out of town (could become the target of burglars)
- Arrange childcare & petcare
- Help griever & children decide what to wear
First Year

What to do in the coming weeks and months after the griever's new reality has set in

**THE FIRST YEAR**

**WHAT TO DO:**

- Make checklists to help griever tackle tasks (i.e. closing out accounts, bills, household items, children's events, work, special dates, etc.)
- Offer to drive & accompany the griever to appointments (certain meetings will trigger strong emotions such as picking up the urn/choosing the gravestone, closing accounts, and meeting w/attorneys)
- Household help (bring toilet paper, empty wastebaskets & take out trash, clean out fridge - especially the food that has been delivered)
- Please keep the conversation two-sided! Tell me about your life again
- Say the deceased loved one's name and share stories
- Help with the little one's homework or invite the child for playdates
- Ensure pets are walked & fed
- Invite the griever to take a walk outside (Nature Heals!)
- Periodically check in simply to say "hi" and "thinking of you". Invite the griever to events, however, do not be offended if s/he doesn't quickly respond or attend events. Keep trying - not every day, but regularly. The more you assure her or him you are there without judgment, the easier it will be for the person to eventually accept your invitation.
Living with Loss

Helping a loved one learn to live without a piece of her or his heart

YEAR TWO AND ON...

WHAT TO DO:

- Keep Checking In!
- Plan spa days
  
  Science backs the power of a good spa day or mani/pedi!
  
  Human touch can ease the grieving process.

- Invite griever to meals, events, coffee/tea, walks, exercise classes
- Think of the griever on holidays and special dates -- especially anniversaries & birthdays (including the deceased loved one's birthday)
- NEVER tell the griever when it's time to "move on." Instead, help her or him MOVE FORWARD. The surviving spouse may decide to remarry or not to date at all, OR s/he may switch the initial decision over time. Do not judge! You have no idea how difficult the widowed life is to live.
- Whether two years or 10+ years out, keep saying the deceased loved one's name! He or she will always be a part of the griever's story and life.
- Handy around the house or with cars? Help the griever with tasks, especially when the weather changes
- Keep the griever in your prayers.
WHERE TO TURN

GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS

- The Grief Consultant (self-care program)
- GriefShare (support groups, online help)
- Hope for Widows (private Facebook group)
- Hot Young Widows (private Facebook group)
- Young, Widowed & Dating (private Facebook group)
- Modern Widows Club (mentoring chapters across the USA & Facebook)
- Black Women Widows Empowered (online support, private Facebook group)
- Premature Widow (online inspiration & events)
- Cocktails & Chemo (support organization)
- Second Firsts (online inspiration)
- One Fit Widow (online inspiration)

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GREAT BOOKS ON GRIEF

OPTION B | SHERYL SANDBERG AND ADAM GRANT

A GRIEF OBSERVED | C.S. LEWIS

THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING | JOAN DIDION

WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE | RABBI HAROLD S. KUSHNER

WIDOWED, BUT NOT WOUNDED: THE HUSTLE & FLOW OF 13 RESILIENT BLACK WIDOWED WOMEN | SABRA ROBINSON

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD | ELIZABETH ALEXANDER

STILL HIS: ONE WIDOW’S JOURNEY TO DISCOVERY AND HOPE | RONI HOLLIS

WIDOWED. RANTS, RAVES AND RANDOMS | JOHN POLO

IT’S OKAY TO LAUGH (CRYING IS COOL TOO): A MEMOIR | NORA MCINERNY PURMORT

SECOND FIRSTS | CHRISTINA RASMUSSEN

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Kimberly Holmes Wiggins lost the love of her life in 2016. Kimberly and Rasheed were equally yoked and truly bound together by God, however, that physical bond was broken when Kimberly’s beloved husband was taken from her in a horrific hit and run in front of their complex in Orlando, Florida.

Kimberly launched a faith-based, retail and grief outreach organization called Still His®. She strives to help widows navigate the waters of significant loss and grief. She shares her personal grief journey on her blog.

Professionally, she has a wealth of award-winning, journalism experience. She’s currently a morning anchor at WBOC-TV on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia. Prior to that position, she reported, anchored and produced stories at stations across the country.

Kimberly graduated from Duke University and Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism.

Learn more about Kimberly or contact her by visiting kimberlyholmeswiggins.com