

How to Help a Loved One Cope with the Loss of a Spouse



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When someone you love loses a spouse, your first instinct is to help. But the grieving process is a difficult one, unique to every person experiencing it. It can seem almost impossible to know what a mourning loved one may need during what is certainly one of the most difficult times of their life. For the most part, there are a few things every person can benefit from while they are struggling to cope.

If you've just lost the love of your life, the last thing on your mind is how to handle the logistics of death. Your loved one's first priority should be [taking care of herself](#). The emotions a person feels during the mourning process run the gamut from sadness and shock to numbness and anger. It's important your loved one allow herself time to grieve a loss. Otherwise, long-term depression or anxiety can set in.

Simply being present can be a huge help, as can providing meals, taking care of household tasks, and lending a listening ear or a shoulder to cry on. Additionally, checking in regularly with your loved one allows you to keep an eye out for signs of depression, like trouble sleeping or eating, or the use of unhealthy coping mechanisms, like excessive alcohol use.

Additionally, there are [numerous tasks](#) that must be handled in the days after a partner passes. As the next of kin and executor of the estate, the grieving spouse or partner will be responsible

for everything from contacting the funeral home to relating the news with family and friends. While most of those tasks will require some input from your loved one, sharing some of the responsibility for the seemingly endless paperwork, phone calls, and arrangements can relieve some stress.

After the funeral, it's important for friends and family members to remember that mourning the loss of a spouse and handling the details of his or her death are both processes, not single events. Emotionally, your loved one will likely be coping with their loss for years. Her day-to-day routines will be a constant reminder of her missing loved one, and special occasions like holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries can be especially painful.

Furthermore, the weeks and months following a death are oftentimes when mental health issues related to the loss begin. In addition to staying in touch with and keeping an eye on your loved one, you can help them figure out [how to move forward](#). This may mean joining a grief support group, engaging in a new hobby, or getting a new pet.

Logistically, your loved one will be dealing with financial, medical, and personal issues long after everyone has paid their respects. What may be most difficult, however, is managing a house full of their [deceased partner's belongings](#). Drawers full of clothes, a set of eyeglasses on the nightstand, or a treasured ballcap from a favorite sports team can be comforting, or they can be painful reminders. Either way, eventually these belongings will need to be dealt with, a task which can pose both mental and physical challenges for your loved one.

When she is ready, offer to help a loved one sort through her spouse's belongings. The physical challenge alone of packing and purging items can be tremendous, especially if the couple still shared a family home. Additionally, seemingly mundane tasks like packing up items to take to Goodwill, discarding old magazines, and figuring out what to do with [heirlooms](#) like quilts or antiques can actually be a great opportunity to share stories and bond with your loved one.

Above all, it's important to remember that everyone deals with death differently. While your loved one may or may not take you up on your offer to help, she will definitely appreciate the care and concern you've shown in her time of need. If you've made her feel loved and supported, you've succeeded.