

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

Grief Support vs Comfort in Bereavement

The ideas of 'comforting' and 'supporting' have two very different implications. Look at their definitions side by side:

Comfort: (*noun*) a state of physical ease and freedom from pain or constraint. (*verb*) make (someone) feel less unhappy; console.

Support: (*verb*) All or part of the weight; hold up. (*verb*) give assistance to. (*noun*) the action of bearing the weight of something or someone or of being so supported. (*noun*) material assistance i.e. emotional help offered to someone in distress, approval and encouragement.

'Comfort' implies a desire to free someone from their pain and make them feel less unhappy, while 'support' implies a desire to provide assistance and help.

Being a grief supporter may or may not be your natural inclination, but as someone who knows how to be a good friend or family member you probably already have the tools. One can be a good *grief supporter* through a willingness to:

Show genuine caring and compassion: *No one knows the perfect thing to say, so stop stressing. Instead focus on treating the griever with caring and compassion. Sometimes this is as simple as asking how the person is doing and then actually listening to what they have to say.*

Provide concrete assistance: *It's tempting to ask the griever to let you know what they need, but it's far more useful to offer specific help.*

Consider a list of things you can do, hopefully you know the griever well enough to predict a few of their needs.

• **Actively listen:** *Talking to someone who will simply listen is often exactly what a griever needs. You may feel like you need to provide answers, but often just having the opportunity to talk things out can help someone organize their thoughts and feelings. Besides, the answers they find on their own are far more valuable than any given to them. Ask the question: **What would help?***

• **Be present:** *Without hovering, be available to the griever by letting them know they can call at any time and/or by casually check in once in a while. Don't push and don't pressure. If they don't want to talk and if they don't take you up on your offers, that's okay. Also, grievers will still be hurting months, even years after a death, well after the casseroles and messages of concern stop rolling in. For this reason, the check-in's that happen after they have essentially been left alone will send the message that you understand their pain is enduring, and reminds them you will be there for them in the long-term. Make it casual, send a card or an e-mail, that way they can choose not to respond if they don't feel like talking. Don't take it to heart if you don't get a response and follow their cues. If they don't engage with you it's probably wise to give them a little space.*

Sometimes changing the way you view your role can change your approach.

<http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/grief-support-vs-comfort/>

*“Life is
changed not
ended”*



*We earn the
trust and
respect of those
around us by
being a
resource, not a
'know it all'*

*“Death does not
end our story...
Death does not
end our
relationships”*