

Caring for Your Grief

A guide for resident and family councils

Voices of Experience

On the following pages: the black boxes in the lower right corner contain video clips from actual residents and families.

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OBJECTIVES:

Meeting someone where they are in grief.

Topics:

What to say? What not to say?

Educating residents and families about social media

Where can residents go who need help?

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OBJECTIVES: Meeting someone where they are in grief.

Topic	Short answer
What not to say?	'I know how you feel' Grief is personal.
What to say?	Sometimes saying nothing is best. Listening is always helpful.
Social media:	Do not announce on Facebook, Instagram, etc. until persons without these media know – spouses / siblings / other critical persons.
Sources of help:	Not everyone can be helped by everything. Encourage the search.

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A few years ago, I lost some keepsakes that had a lot of sentimental value to me. Some of them had been inherited from family, and others were items that I collected over my life. I don't think that it is reasonable to grieve over physical objects, but I did. I started crying and couldn't stop.

Caring for Yourself

Any loss you grieve is valid.

Grief can include loss of pets, treasures, abilities, or ideas.

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As a caregiver, you have to take care of yourself first. In an airplane, they tell you to put on your own mask before you help other people with theirs. Or, if you think about a pitcher of water, you cannot continuously pour from it without refilling it.

Caring for Yourself

Grief hurts both emotionally and physically.

Keep going. Engage your mind.

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I would have liked somebody who had been through a similar circumstance to assure me that someday it's going to be over. I wish someone had said, "I see you're working hard at it, I can't really tell you what will work for you but I can tell you if you keep looking you'll find it, and I will be here to talk to you about it all the way."

Caring for Yourself

Share your grief with someone you trust.

Do not worry about being a burden.

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There were support groups that I didn't take full advantage of; I didn't take much advantage at all actually. I lost a parent to Alzheimer's in '97, and of course a lot of things have improved, and the Alzheimer's Association has grown since then. It offers so much that I wasn't aware of. But when I finally took advantage of the support groups, they were really good.

Caring for Yourself

Search for and take advantage of available grief resources.

When support is offered, say YES.

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I remember walking through the dementia unit to visit my wife and seeing several patients just sitting silently. Then I saw a CNA pick up a puzzle, set it up, and start to work on it. Patients came up and asked her what she was doing, and she invited them to help her. This was a great way to get them involved in an activity.

Caring for Others

A quiet presence can be enough. Talk is not always needed.

Shared activity works too.

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Caring for Others

Let them know you care – send a note, a phone call, a text.

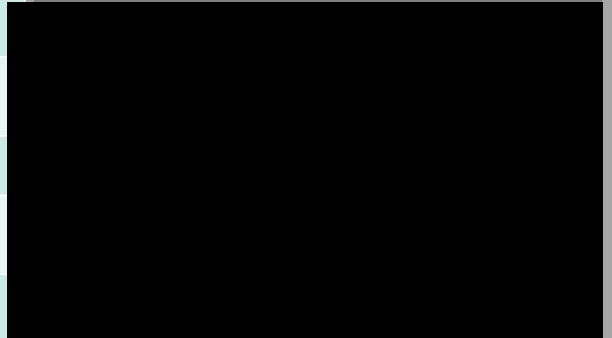
Do not say *'I know how you feel'* or *'You need to get over it.'*

Do say *'I am sorry for your loss.'*

Offer to do something specific, like *'May I bring coffee tomorrow at 10?'*

Organize volunteers to visit grieving persons you know. Visit in pairs.

When a neighbor dies, and I see the family come in, I try to sympathize, but I never say, "I know just how you feel." I really hate when people say that. Everyone experiences death differently. I also try not to say, "she's in a better place" or anything else that's religious, because you never know what other people believe."



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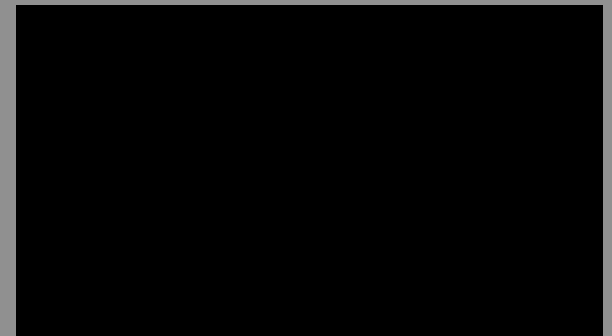
Caring for Others

Planning at the end of life helps your friends and family with their grief.

Keep written records of your wishes and instructions for your care. Keep them in a place where others know to find them.

Do not assume that your family knows your wishes.

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Standard of Care	The current standard of care during an emergency is to do everything possible in an attempt to save someone's life unless there is a <u>medical order</u> to the contrary
Advanced Care Plans (ACP)	ACP allow individuals to share their treatment preferences in the event they can no longer speak for themselves. There are two kinds:

	Legal Documents	Medical Orders
Includes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Directives • Living Wills • Health Care Power of Attorney 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) • Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST)
Purpose	Identify a surrogate decision maker. Provide general wishes about treatment.	Order emergency personnel to provide specific care during a medical emergency.
Who needs	All competent adults	Seriously ill individuals who are not expected to live more than one year.
Useful in an emergency?	No. Medical personnel cannot follow these.	Yes. These are orders signed by a physician or nurse practitioner.

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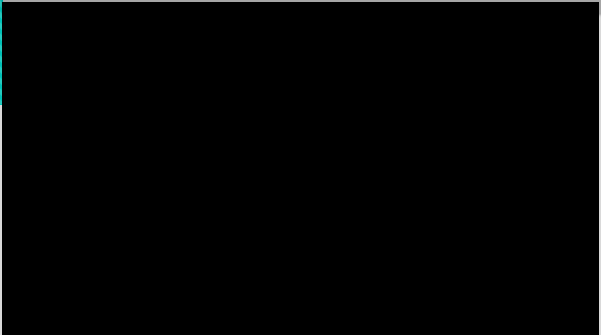


This past year we did a memorial service for everybody that had passed away during that year. We had it out on the front lawn. The activities director read a little passage, I read a poem. One of the secretaries sang and the head chef played the guitar. At the end, we released a butterfly for every resident that passed away. So it was really, really sweet, and it seemed very appreciated.

Caring for Others

Set aside a time and place to remember.

Regular memorials allow you to get and give care.



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