

# 5 Ways to Help Friends and Family Navigate the Early Days of Loss



Everyone reacts differently to loss. Extraverts sometimes isolate. Introverts surprisingly crack open and crave community. It's nearly impossible to know what to do or say to someone who has just suffered the loss of someone they love. And the person who has endured such loss likely can't help you because they have no idea what they need themselves. Whether you are a friend, family member or casual acquaintance, here are five ways to help you navigate the early days of tragedy ...

## #1 Don't overthink it. Just show up.

If you want to support someone experiencing unimaginable grief, show up and give one of the most precious resources you have to offer, your time. It doesn't matter if you were close friends or mere acquaintances. If you feel pulled to show up, you should follow our heart and do it, always respecting the visiting hours set by the family. I was an introvert who opened my home 24/7 after my son passed away and had people holding space for me and my family for months. Friends, family, colleagues, neighbors, teachers, coaches - they all showed up and made it clear with their presence that my family and I were a priority for them. Others I know who have lost a spouse, parent or child, preferred that guests schedule visiting hours. For them, just knowing they had access to visitors at any time gave them some much needed comfort. In the early moments of loss, those who showed up reminded me that time is a gift and humanity is inherently good.

## #2 When there are no words, give a hug.

Hugs can say more than words in impossible moments, and each one is like a dose of medicine. When you give a hug or hold a hand you are transferring energy, so you should intentionally infuse each one with love and your highest intentions. The person on the receiving end can be unknowingly lifted by your energy and use it to get through each subsequent minute. If proximity is an issue, or you can tell that touch is not welcomed, send your love energetically - telepathically- or through any other silent means that feel right to you. I'm not a religious person but I have come to appreciate the power of our thoughts and intentions, and how they impact all of us. The science on this is fascinating and I will address some of it in future blog posts. Just remember for now that when there are no words to adequately express what you feel or want to convey, open-up your heart and express yourself though nonverbal means of communication. It's far better than saying and doing nothing at all.

## #3 Be authentic.

It takes a village to raise a child AND to survive losing one, and EVERYONE has something to contribute. It is not a competition, and no one is keeping score. This same philosophy applies to all kinds of loss. Maybe you are the one who has the time to show up and hold space for multiple hours at a time. Maybe you deliver food for the family or organize a meal train with others who want to help. Maybe you are the artist who makes a special card or painting for the family, or you are the friend who shares pictures and memories that other loved ones had never heard or seen. Show up in your most authentic way and you will never regret that you did.

## #4. Talk about the person you have lost... and never stop.

Some people freeze up and make a conscious choice not to talk about loved ones who have passed away for fear that they may say the wrong thing or trigger more sadness for the person who has lost someone they love. But unless that's the approach the family has asked everyone to take, this is one of the WORST things you can do. It's far more healing for everyone involved to share memories of the person you miss. Ways to do this include exchanging pictures; disclosing ways that the person who has passed inspires you; and conveying when they enter your thoughts and even your dreams. We are all here to learn, grow and impact our world in positive ways. Nothing is more meaningful to a grieving family than letting them know that their loved one will always be remembered and continue to impact the world through you.

## #5. What to give or send to the house.

Even if the grieving family specifies "no gifts," some people feel compelled to send something to let the family know that they are supported, loved and have a community surrounding them ready to help. In the early moments of overwhelming tragedy, just know that it's very hard for a grieving person to digest any of it. The family often can't process cards. They can barely see flowers. They may identify a charity or cause to which they hope their community will donate, but it could still be weeks if not months before they can process and thank all those who did. Bottom line, send what feels right to you (if something does) but remember you are being called to give without any expectation of receiving. It will likely be during the loneliest and most difficult moments when the receiver will look up and see your gift waiting for them, and your thoughts behind the gift will give them some much needed comfort. There is no right or wrong in terms of what to send. Flowers. Candles. A handwritten card. A Journal. Healing Stones. They are all a gesture of love. And love is your best guide at times like these.



*From my heart to yours,*

*Nikki*

[@HealingwithNikki](#)

[NikkiMark.com](#)



[dearnikki@nikkimark.com](mailto:dearnikki@nikkimark.com)