



---

# SUPPORTING SOMEONE WHO IS GRIEVING: PRACTICAL HELP GUIDE & CHECKLIST

---

How to Show Up, What to Say, and Meaningful Ways to Help



OCTOBER 20, 2025

MEMORIAL MERITS  
[MemorialMerits.com](https://MemorialMerits.com)

# **SUPPORTING SOMEONE WHO IS GRIEVING: PRACTICAL HELP GUIDE & CHECKLIST** *How to Show Up, What to Say, and Meaningful Ways to Help*

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

When someone you care about is grieving, you want to help but may feel uncertain about what to do or say. This guide provides practical tools to support someone through loss with compassion and effectiveness.

Use this guide to:

- Understand what grieving people actually need
- Know what to say (and what never to say)
- Identify concrete ways to help
- Plan ongoing support beyond the first weeks
- Navigate different types of loss

**Your presence and care matter more than perfect words.**

---

## **UNDERSTANDING WHAT THEY NEED**

**The person I'm supporting:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Their relationship to the person who died:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of death:** \_\_\_\_\_

**My relationship to the grieving person:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

## **WHAT GRIEVING PEOPLE ACTUALLY NEED**

**Check the needs you can help provide:**

☐ **Presence without solutions**

- Just being there without trying to fix anything

*[Memorial Merits | Clear Guidance Through Impossible Times](https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/)*

Read the full guide at: <https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/>

- Sitting with their pain without making it better

☐ **Permission to feel everything**

- Validation of all emotions without judgment
- No pressure to feel better or move on
- Space for contradictory feelings

☐ **Practical help with daily tasks**

- Meals, household chores, errands
- Help with logistics and paperwork
- Childcare or dependent care

☐ **To hear their person's name**

- Talking about the person who died
- Sharing memories and stories
- Acknowledging the person's importance

☐ **Ongoing support beyond the first week**

- Consistent presence for months
- Remembering significant dates
- Staying connected long-term

---

## **WHAT TO SAY (AND NEVER SAY)**

### **HELPFUL PHRASES ✓**

#### **Simple, honest statements that provide comfort:**

☐ "I'm so sorry" ☐ "This is terrible" or "This really sucks" ☐ "I don't know what to say" ☐ "Tell me about [name]" ☐ "I'm here for you" (with specific offers) ☐ "It's okay to not be okay" ☐ "You don't have to be strong right now" ☐ "I can't imagine what you're going through" ☐ "[Name] was lucky to have you" ☐ "I'm thinking about you"

*[Memorial Merits | Clear Guidance Through Impossible Times](https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/)*

Read the full guide at: <https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/>

**Practice saying these phrases so they feel natural when needed.**

---

## **PHRASES TO NEVER SAY X**

**Well-intentioned but hurtful statements to avoid:**

☐ "They're in a better place" ☐ "Everything happens for a reason" ☐ "God needed another angel" ☐ "At least they're not suffering" ☐ "At least they lived a long life" ☐ "You're so strong" ☐ "I know how you feel" (unless very similar loss) ☐ "Time heals all wounds" ☐ "They would want you to be happy" ☐ "You need to be strong for [others]" ☐ "Are you over it yet?" ☐ "You can have another [baby/relationship/etc.]"

**If you've said these in the past, forgive yourself. Now you know better.**

---

## **PRACTICAL WAYS TO HELP**

### **IMMEDIATE SUPPORT (First Days/Weeks)**

**Check actions you can take:**

**FOOD & MEALS:** ☐ Bring ready-to-eat meals (include paper plates/disposables) ☐ Drop off groceries without asking first ☐ Provide gift cards for food delivery ☐ Organize meal train with others ☐ Include beverages, snacks, comfort foods

**Specific plan:**

- What I'll bring: \_\_\_\_\_
  - When I'll bring it: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Dietary considerations: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

**HOUSEHOLD TASKS:** ☐ Mow lawn or shovel snow ☐ Take out trash ☐ Do dishes or laundry ☐ Walk the dog ☐ Clean house or specific rooms ☐ Water plants ☐ Bring in mail

**Specific plan:**

- Task(s) I'll handle: \_\_\_\_\_

*[Memorial Merits | Clear Guidance Through Impossible Times](https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/)*

Read the full guide at: <https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/>

- Day/time I'll do it: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Frequency: ☐ One-time ☐ Weekly ☐ As needed
- 

**CHILDCARE & DEPENDENT CARE:** ☐ Pick up kids from school on specific days ☐ Keep children for afternoon/evening ☐ Take children for fun activity ☐ Help with homework or bedtime routines ☐ Drive to activities or appointments ☐ Provide care for elderly parents or dependents

**Specific plan:**

- What I'll do: \_\_\_\_\_
  - When: \_\_\_\_\_
  - How often: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

**LOGISTICS & COORDINATION:** ☐ Make necessary phone calls ☐ Research funeral homes or services ☐ Help with paperwork ☐ Coordinate visitors or calls ☐ Update others so they don't have to repeat information ☐ Drive them to appointments ☐ Sit with them during difficult tasks

**Specific help:**

---

---

---

**ONGOING SUPPORT (Weeks and Months Later)**

**This is when support matters most, as everyone else disappears.**

**CHECK-INS:** ☐ Set phone reminder to text every few days ☐ Call weekly at predictable time ☐ Show up at their house regularly ☐ Send care packages or cards ☐ Schedule regular walks or coffee dates

**My check-in plan:**

- Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

*[Memorial Merits | Clear Guidance Through Impossible Times](https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/)*

Read the full guide at: <https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/>

- Method: ☐ Text ☐ Call ☐ Visit ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Day/time: \_\_\_\_\_

---

## **SIGNIFICANT DATES TO REMEMBER:**

### **Mark these on your calendar and reach out:**

- One-week mark: \_\_\_\_\_
- One-month mark: \_\_\_\_\_
- Three-month mark: \_\_\_\_\_
- Six-month mark: \_\_\_\_\_
- One-year anniversary of death: \_\_\_\_\_
- Their person's birthday: \_\_\_\_\_
- Their person's death date (annual): \_\_\_\_\_
- Holidays (first Christmas, Thanksgiving, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_
- Other significant dates: \_\_\_\_\_

**My plan for significant dates:** ☐ Send text acknowledging the day ☐ Call to check in ☐ Visit if they want company ☐ Send flowers or meaningful gift ☐ Share a memory of their person

---

**INVITATIONS & INCLUSION:** ☐ Continue inviting them to social events (no pressure to attend) ☐ Include them in group plans ☐ Do low-pressure activities together (walk, watch TV) ☐ Invite them to future events (showing they're in your future) ☐ Include them in holidays and celebrations

### **My inclusion plan:**

---



---



---

*[Memorial Merits | Clear Guidance Through Impossible Times](https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/)*

Read the full guide at: <https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/>

**NEXT-PHASE SUPPORT:** ☐ Help with return to work transition ☐ Assist with estate matters if asked ☐ Support through "firsts" (first birthday, holiday, etc.) ☐ Help with longer-term decisions ☐ Be present for ongoing challenges

---

## COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

### TEXTING & MESSAGING

#### Helpful text messages:

☐ "Thinking of you today" ☐ "No need to respond, just wanted you to know I'm here" ☐ "Remembering [name] and their [specific quality/memory]" ☐ "Can I drop off dinner Tuesday at 6pm?" ☐ "Want company? I can come sit with you, or give you space"

**Text frequency:** ☐ Daily ☐ Every few days ☐ Weekly ☐ As needed

**Don't expect responses.** Grieving people often can't reply. Send supportive messages anyway.

---

### PHONE CALLS

**When calling:** ☐ Keep it brief unless they want to talk longer ☐ Let them guide the conversation ☐ Don't fill silence with chatter ☐ Listen more than you talk ☐ It's okay if they cry ☐ Don't try to cheer them up

#### Call schedule:

- Day/time I'll call: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

### IN-PERSON VISITS

**Guidelines for visiting:** ☐ Confirm they want company before showing up ☐ Or text "Coming by at 2pm with food" for practical help visits ☐ Don't stay too long (unless they want you to) ☐ Let them lead conversation topics ☐ Be comfortable with silence and tears ☐ Bring specific help, not just visit ☐ Don't expect them to host or entertain you

*[Memorial Merits | Clear Guidance Through Impossible Times](https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/)*

Read the full guide at: <https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/>

**Visit plan:**

---

---

## **SUPPORTING DIFFERENT TYPES OF LOSS**

**Adjust your support based on their specific loss:**

### **LOSS OF SPOUSE/PARTNER**

**Specific support needs:** ☐ Help with tasks their partner handled (household, finances, etc.) ☐ Continue couple-friend inclusion (don't drop them) ☐ Acknowledge identity shift from "we" to "I" ☐ Offer to talk through decisions ☐ Remember they lost their primary support person

**My specific plan:**

---

---

---

### **LOSS OF PARENT**

**Specific support needs:** ☐ Don't minimize based on age ("they lived a long life") ☐ Help with estate logistics if needed ☐ Acknowledge this foundational relationship loss ☐ Recognize identity shift (no living parents, becoming older generation) ☐ Support through clearing parent's home if applicable

**My specific plan:**

---

---

---

### **LOSS OF CHILD**

**Critical guidelines:** ☐ NEVER suggest they can have another child ☐ NEVER compare to your own losses unless also child loss ☐ Always remember and say the child's name ☐ Acknowledge birthdays and death anniversary forever ☐ Understand this grief often intensifies over time ☐

*[Memorial Merits | Clear Guidance Through Impossible Times](https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/)*

Read the full guide at: <https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/>



Support them long-term without expecting them to "move on" ☐ Do not expect them to comfort you about their child's death

**My specific plan:**

---

---

---

## LOSS OF SIBLING

**Specific support needs:** ☐ Acknowledge unique sibling bond and shared history ☐ Understand they may be supporting grieving parents too ☐ Remember the sibling as individual, not just in relation to them ☐ Recognize this often-underrecognized loss

**My specific plan:**

---

---

---

## LOSS BY SUICIDE

**Critical guidelines:** ☐ Never judge or comment on the person's choice ☐ Let them talk about guilt and "what ifs" without trying to fix ☐ Connect them with suicide loss support groups ☐ Don't avoid mentioning how the person died ☐ Understand this creates complicated grief with added trauma

**Resources to share:**

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: [afsp.org](https://afsp.org)
  - Alliance of Hope for Suicide Loss Survivors: [allianceofhope.org](https://allianceofhope.org)
- 

## TRAUMATIC OR SUDDEN LOSS

**Specific support needs:** ☐ Understand shock lasts longer with sudden loss ☐ Recognize trauma symptoms alongside grief ☐ Help them feel safe (loss shatters assumptions) ☐ Encourage trauma-focused professional support ☐ Be patient with non-linear grief process

*[Memorial Merits | Clear Guidance Through Impossible Times](https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/)*

Read the full guide at: <https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/>

**My specific plan:**

---

---

## **COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID**

**Check any mistakes you want to be mindful about:**

☐ Disappearing after the funeral ☐ Comparing their grief to others or your own ☐ Trying to fix their grief or cheer them up ☐ Setting timelines for when they should feel better ☐ Making their grief about your emotions ☐ Avoiding saying the person's name ☐ Offering only generic help ("let me know if you need anything") ☐ Judging their choices about how they grieve ☐ Expecting thanks or acknowledgment ☐ Taking over their decisions ☐ Sharing their grief publicly without permission

**Reflection:**

- Mistakes I may have made in the past: \_\_\_\_\_
  - How I'll do better: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

## **TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AS SUPPORTER**

**Supporting someone in grief affects you too:**

### **YOUR OWN EMOTIONS**

☐ I acknowledge this is hard for me too ☐ I'm talking to others (not the griever) about my struggles ☐ I'm considering therapy if this triggers my own losses ☐ I'm setting boundaries about what I can realistically provide

**My support system:**

- People I can talk to: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Ways I'm processing my emotions: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

## **RECOGNIZING YOUR LIMITS**

*[Memorial Merits | Clear Guidance Through Impossible Times](https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/)*

Read the full guide at: <https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/>

☐ I accept I cannot take away their pain ☐ I know when professional help is needed ☐ I recognize if this triggers my own mental health struggles ☐ I'm pacing myself for long-term support

**My boundaries:**

- What I can realistically provide: \_\_\_\_\_
  - What I need to take care of myself: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

**SUPPORT TIMELINE & ACTION PLAN**

**IMMEDIATE (First 2 Weeks)**

**Actions I'll take:** ☐

|       |                          |
|-------|--------------------------|
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ |                          |

---

**SHORT-TERM (Weeks 3-8)**

**Actions I'll take:** ☐

|       |                          |
|-------|--------------------------|
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ |                          |

---

**ONGOING (Months 3+)**

**Actions I'll take:** ☐

|       |                          |
|-------|--------------------------|
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ |                          |

---

**ANNUAL REMINDERS**

*[Memorial Merits | Clear Guidance Through Impossible Times](https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/)*

Read the full guide at: <https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/>

Dates I'll remember each year: ☐

\_\_\_\_\_ ☐

\_\_\_\_\_ ☐

\_\_\_\_\_

---

## QUICK REFERENCE: WHEN IN DOUBT

**If you're unsure what to do:**

✓ Show up (even imperfectly) ✓ Say "I'm so sorry" ✓ Bring food ✓ Say their person's name ✓  
Listen more than you talk ✓ Do something practical without asking ✓ Keep showing up after  
everyone else leaves ✓ Remember significant dates ✓ Be okay with tears and silence ✓ It's  
better to show up imperfectly than not at all

---

## NOTES & REFLECTIONS

**Things I'm learning about supporting them:**

---

---

---

**Questions or concerns I have:**

---

---

---

**Ways they've indicated I've helped:**

---

---

**Adjustments I need to make:**

---

*[Memorial Merits | Clear Guidance Through Impossible Times](https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/)*

Read the full guide at: <https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/>

---

---

## IMPORTANT REMINDERS

**Your presence matters more than perfect words Showing up consistently beats saying the right thing They won't forget who was there for them Long-term support matters most You don't need to fix their grief Just being there is enough**

---

**Download more grief support resources at [MemorialMerits.com](https://MemorialMerits.com)**

**Read the complete article: Supporting Someone Who Is Grieving: What to Say, What to Do, and How to Help**

**If they need additional support: Solace is available 24/7 at [MemorialMerits.com/solace](https://MemorialMerits.com/solace)**

*[Memorial Merits | Clear Guidance Through Impossible Times](https://MemorialMerits.com)*

Read the full guide at: <https://memorialmerits.com/supporting-someone-grieving-how-to-help-friend/>