



10 Best Things to Say to a Grieving Person

The following suggestions offer kindness and compassion.

1. ***"I'm so sorry for your loss."*** It's short, sweet, heartfelt, and always welcomed.
2. ***"Please know that I'm here for you."*** It never hurts to remind someone in pain of your friendship, no matter how close you are.
3. ***"You're in my thoughts and prayers."*** Even people who aren't religious are unlikely to be offended if they know you're sincere (or leave off the "prayers" if you think they might be).
4. ***"Remember you can call me at any hour."*** Alternately, be specific: "You know I'm always up till midnight." Or, "It's never too early in the morning to call."
5. ***"She was such a wonderful person."*** Don't worry that you'll make the bereaved person think about the loved one by bringing up positive reminiscences; you can rest assured he or she is always in mind already.
6. ***"I don't know what to say."*** Admitting you're tongue-tied about offering condolences is better than falling back on a platitude.
7. ***"I can't imagine what you're going through."*** Candor when you give condolence beats comparing the death with your own stories of loss.
8. ***"Would you like to talk about it? I'm listening."*** Provide a gentle opening for the person to share turbulent emotions, if desired.
9. ***"How are you feeling -- really?"*** A more pointed invitation to unload may be welcomed by some; just don't press.
10. ***"I've brought you a meal to eat or freeze; it's in disposable containers so you don't have to return anything."*** Better than asking, "How can I help?" is to step in with concrete help: bringing a meal or showing up to mow the lawn.



10 Worst Things to Say to a Grieving Person

If you want to be consoling and compassionate when offering condolence, **avoid** phrases like the following:

1. **"Stop crying; you're only making it worse."** Expressing emotions, even strongly if so inclined, is a natural, normal, and healthy reaction to death.
2. **"You should let your emotions out or you'll feel worse later."** It's also normal for some people to *not* cry; not showing outward emotions doesn't mean the person is grieving less or will have some kind of "delayed reaction."
3. **"At least he's not suffering anymore."** This offers little condolence. Whatever the circumstances of the death, the bereaved person is still suffering.
4. **"You must be strong." (Or "God never gives us more than we can handle.")** Such statements imply that it's wrong to feel bereft, which is a perfectly natural response.
5. **"God must have wanted her."** No mortal can purport to know God's purpose. People who don't believe in God might also bristle at your presumption in attaching a religious significance to the loss.
6. **"Don't dwell on it."** It's normal and natural -- as well as helpful -- to talk about the person who died.
7. **"I know exactly how you feel."** In fact, you can't. Even if you've experienced a similar loss, you're not the bereaved person, and you didn't have the same relationship to the person who died.
8. **"At least he was old enough to live a full life."** How old would old "enough" be?
9. **"You're lucky. At least [you have money, you're young and attractive, etc]."** Loss is always horrible. Comparing misfortunes to others' or to alternate scenarios won't make the person feel better.
10. **"It's been [six months, one year, etc.]; it's time to move on."** People never stop grieving for a lost loved one. Affixing a deadline to mourning is insensitive and does little to help people learn to live through their loss.