

Helping and Supporting a Grieving Friend or Loved One

Since 1980, EveryStep's Amanda the Panda program has delivered love and caring through innovative services such as weekend grief camps, support groups, fun days, school visits and holiday support to inspire hope and healing after the death of a loved one. For more information, visit everystep.org
(515) 223-4847 | (877) 533-4847

When in doubt, err on the side of silent, emotionally-connected support. If you can't think of something to say, offer eye contact or a squeeze of their hand. Your support can be conveyed, with silent presence. It is okay that you don't have all the answers. You can reassure the bereaved person by letting them know that you will be there, as a companion, when needed during this sorrowful time even though you can't take away their pain. Have confidence that they will again find meaning and joy in life.

Dos and Do Nots for Providing Support and Comfort to Adults:

What to Do

- Behave naturally
- Show genuine concern
- Offer love patiently and unconditionally
- Offer hugs or an arm around the shoulder as appropriate
- Sit next to the person who is wanting closeness
- Make it clear that you are there to listen
- Express your care and concern
- Say "I love you" if you feel close enough
- Talk openly and directly about the person who died
- Cry if you feel like crying
- Keep in mind that evenings, weekends, anniversaries, and holidays can be extra challenging times

What Not to Do or Say

- Avoid the bereaved person
- Pry into personal matters
- Ask questions about the circumstances of the death; but do be open to hearing what the bereaved *wants* to say about it
- Offer advice or quick solutions
- "I know how you feel"
- "You should___"
- "Time heals all wounds"
- Try to cheer up the bereaved or distract them from the emotional intensity:
 - "At least he's no longer in pain"
 - "She is in a better place now"
- Minimize the loss:
 - "Oh, it's not that bad"
 - "You'll be okay"
 - "Things will go back to normal before you know it"
- Lead the bereaved to false assumption that self-medicating with alcohol and drugs will provide a solution. This is a temporary fix for their emotion Pain and makes it worse in the long term.

