



What to avoid saying to someone who is grieving

Naturally, when someone loses a loved one, you want to console them, but it can be difficult to know what to say to someone who is grieving.

If you are worried that you will say the wrong thing or make them more upset, read on to find out what you should avoid saying and what to do or say instead.



“How are you?”

Although you may have the best intentions and genuinely want to know how they are, someone that is grieving is likely to be constantly asked how they are or if they are okay.

They may feel compelled to say they are fine or doing okay when in reality they are not.

Instead, you should just acknowledge that they are probably struggling and in pain by saying something like “this must be a really tough time for you” or “you must really miss them”.

“They’re in a better place”

Whether or not the bereaved is religious, saying something like “they are in a better place” is not likely to be comforting, and can sometimes seem cold or callous.

The fact of the matter is that their loved one is no longer around, and they would rather they were still here, not “on the other side”.

“They aren’t suffering anymore”

If the deceased was in pain before they died or they took their own life, you may be tempted to try and offer comfort by saying “at least they are not suffering anymore” but you should avoid saying this.

Even if they acknowledge this, it does not make it any easier for the loved ones that are left behind to accept what has happened.

“I know how you feel”

Refrain from saying you know how someone feels or relating what happened to something you have been through.

No two experiences are the same and no two people are the same. Going through a loss is such a personal experience and not everyone feels or processes things the same way.

You could say “I can only imagine what you must be feeling” - by saying this, you are not assuming how they are feeling, or invalidating or belittling their feelings.

“It’s just part of life”

Obviously, death is inevitable but it does not need to be pointed out. The person who is grieving will be painfully aware of this and needs not to be reminded.

Avoid saying anything along the lines of “it is just part of life” or “it happens to everyone eventually” - this will just make it seem like you are minimising their loss or brushing it off.

“You’re handling this well”

It may seem like they are doing better than you would expect, but they may just be putting on a brave face or suppressing their true feelings.

Do not say “you seem to be handling this well” or “you are doing better than expected” to someone who has lost a loved one.

People deal with things in their own way. They may feel that they do not want to let on how they are feeling or put their sadness onto others or make them feel uncomfortable.

Acknowledge that they may have good days and bad days, and assure them that they are always free to express their emotions around you.

“I’m here if you need me”

Actions speak louder than words. Rather than just saying you are there for them or offering to do something for them, you should just be there.

Whether you help out with housework, take out their bins, cook for them, or do their shopping, it will mean so much to someone who is grieving. These will be the last things on their mind at this difficult time.

Nothing at all

The worst thing you can do is say nothing at all.

Although you may feel uncomfortable talking about death or worried you may say the wrong thing, there is nothing worse than avoiding the subject altogether.

If you are not sure what to say, you could share a memory you have of their loved one or something the bereaved person shared with you about them.

They will likely love the opportunity to reminisce and be reminded of a happy time. They may even learn something about their loved one that they did not already know.

Any gesture, no matter how small, can mean so much to someone who is grieving.