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## About this eBook

The purpose of writing this eBook is to respond to an urgent and pressing need of bereaved. They need to receive on-going compassionate support and understanding to help them get through the debilitating time of pain, confusion and vulnerability. It offers helpful suggestions to guide the many well meaning people who wish to support the bereaved with understanding and sympathy.

The contents in this eBook will help someone who really cares and shares in the sorrow of the grieving to become informed about what to say and what to avoid saying, and the right things to do to continue giving comfort and support as the bereaved work through the phases of grief and begin to accept the absence of their loved one.

Here you will find information gathered from extensive research by the author on this subject, and from the author's personal experience when loved ones have died. The information is also gathered from interactions with various organisations in the field of death, loss, grief and bereavement, with comments and opinions based on the author's many years of involvement in the field of grief and bereavement support.

## Compassionate and sensitive support when someone dies

### What to avoid saying to the bereaved

It is a common experience to feel ill at ease when meeting with the relatives and friends of a person who has died. Many of us are uncertain about what is right to say to those who are grieving. We all want to say something appropriate to convey our condolences and acknowledge the person's loss.

Having nothing appropriate to say can give the impression of being indifferent and uncaring. Even with the best of intentions, we risk making comments that are not helpful or that may be misunderstood and/or hurtful, unless we are aware of what we should say and what to avoid saying.

Saying the wrong thing can inadvertently cause anger or feelings of resentment. We must be careful not to give the impression that we have little or no appreciation of the significance of the loss suffered by the bereaved.

The following guidelines identify what you should avoid saying when meeting the relatives and friends after the person has died.



#### IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

#### Things to avoid saying to the bereaved

Avoid saying	Reason
'I know how you feel...' 'When this happened to me...' 'I know what you're going through...'	Part of the normal process of grieving is experiencing feelings of anger and isolation resulting from the loss. Therefore, most bereaved people are seldom able to accept the presumption that anyone else can know how deeply the loss has affected them. They feel that only they can know their overwhelming sense of loss.  Essentially, since the loss of a loved one does not affect everyone in the same way even after having lost a loved one in similar circumstances, it is wrong to presume to know exactly how another person feels or what the other person is going through.
'Look at what you have to be thankful for...'	Pointing out all the good things in the life of the bereaved does not help at this stage of grief and pain.  The bereaved is aware of all that they have to be thankful for but at this point in time the loss suffered as a result of the person's death is all-consuming so that hardly anything else matters.



Avoid saying	Reason
<p>'He or she is in a better place now...'</p> <p>'Your loved one is waiting for you in heaven...'</p>	<p>The bereaved may be in no mood at this stage to hear that there is a better place to be in or even that there is a heaven. In their state of grief, such comments are unhelpful and could be misinterpreted to mean that being here with them was not a good place for their loved one to be.</p> <p>Whether the bereaved believes that there is a heaven or not, they are, at this stage, trying their best to cope with more pain than they can bear, so there is little comfort in being told that their loved one is in heaven instead of being here with them.</p>
<p>'It's part of God's plan...'</p> <p>'He/she was such a good person, God wanted him or her to be with him...'</p> <p>'It was meant to happen...'</p> <p>'It's for the best...'</p> <p>'There is a reason for everything...'</p>	<p>Such comments are offered in sympathy but are not helpful because the bereaved may be a long way from being ready to accept the loss. We may be unaware of whether or not the bereaved believes that there is a God. When a loved one dies, no matter what the circumstances, for the bereaved to accept that the death is meant to be, or that it is for the better, is more than they can tolerate at the time. What is important at this stage is to validate the loss that the bereaved is suffering.</p>
<p>'It will get better...'</p> <p>'Time heals all wounds...'</p> <p>'This is behind you now...'</p> <p>'It's time to get on with your life...'</p> <p>'Let's not dwell on the past...'</p>	<p>We know that things will get better and the people who are grieving will heal eventually but they may not be ready to get on with life just yet. This could be because they are not yet able to accept that getting on with life does not mean 'forgetting' the loved one who has died. Or it could be that the bereaved simply feels completely overwhelmed and unable to cope with the thought of having to continue their lives without the person who has died.</p> <p>In any case, people grieve in their own way and at their own pace. There is no predictable time for reaching the stage in grief when the ability to get on with life is restored.</p>
<p>'There is a reason for everything...'</p> <p>'Don't cry...'</p> <p>'Cheer up...'</p> <p>'Be brave...'</p> <p>'Be strong...'</p> <p>'Hang in there...'</p> <p>'Let's not talk about it... it'll upset you too much.'</p>	<p>This kind of comment is usually made by a person who is uncomfortable with the fact that the bereaved is crying or showing other signs of being upset.</p> <p>Allowing the bereaved to express their pain and grief by crying, wailing or screaming must be accepted as normal so long as it is not destructive, and whether or not it makes us uncomfortable.</p>
<p>'At least he/she had a good innings...'</p> <p>'He/she is not suffering anymore...'</p>	<p>These are the kind of comments usually made when the person who has died is old or had been suffering for a long time. Although this may be the case, making such comments can be insensitive.</p> <p>What is important is to acknowledge the loss and suffering of the bereaved and the fact that since their loved one has died, as far as they are concerned, life has changed and they are in grief and mourning.</p>