



WISDOM FOR THE CAREGIVER

Death of a Spouse

Additional Wisdom for the Caregiver

- One of the most significant gestures of caring came from my three-and-a-half year old grandson, Jacob. One day, after my husband John died, Jacob asked me if I was still sad. Then he said, ‘Grandpa John must be really sad not to be able to talk to you.’ And during the first Christmas season after John’s death, Jacob asked, ‘Who makes the Baby Jesus cake in heaven?’ Then a few seconds later, he answered his own question: ‘I know Grandpa John is baking the Baby Jesus cake.’ His comments meant so much to me because (1) he missed Grandpa John too, and (2) his questions invited me to think about and talk about John.”
-Ann
- Call and visit often. There is a significant letdown after the funeral when friends return to the living of their own lives. In addition to special days (birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays) widowed persons say that Sunday is the loneliest day of the week.
- Encourage the person to talk [when the two of you have some private time together]. Help the person express how she or he feels even if you have heard it a few times before. People in pain don’t mind talking about it when they have a receptive audience. It helps them to talk about it over and over again.”
-Phil
- “You have been in my thoughts’ is a greeting which will elicit a response of the grieving person’s choosing. If there is a need to share feelings, the person has permission to share, or he or she can simply say, ‘Thank you,’ and go on to talk of other things.”
-Mickie
- When talking to or writing a note to a friend or relative of a deceased person it is very meaningful to share an incident, story, or an admirable quality that you especially appreciate about the deceased. When my husband died at an early age, I was overwhelmed by the number of people who demonstrated their love and caring. Their remarks like, ‘He was the best friend I ever had,’ or, ‘I remember how he helped me by...’ or, ‘He was a prince among men. I remember one time when he...’ were a tribute to him and a gift and inspiration to me. I knew that he was a wonderful husband and father and friend, and what a comfort to know that others knew too.
-Joyce
- “Invite your friend to walk and talk. Both are excellent therapies for grief.”
-Mickie
- Include your widowed (or divorced) friend just as you would have before his or her partner died. Please start a new trend by inviting one or more persons without partners to your social events and gatherings.

- Take the initiative in inviting your friend out to a specific event. If your friend refuses, call again on another occasion. Be persistent. Suggest things you can do together rather than asking if they want to do something. Your friend may feel lethargic and may say no. Even if you simply go for a walk together, such contact will help relieve the loneliness and initiate socialization.”
-Delores Kuenning, *Helping People Through Grief* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1987), p.220
- Call frequently to say ‘I’m thinking of you.’ If the person is not home, leave a message on the answering machine.” -Mary
- “Encourage your friend to cry, knowing that tears bring healing.” -Mary
- After my first wife died, the people who had also suffered the loss of a spouse were the ones who helped me the most. Even though some of them were practically strangers, what they said or did not say meant more to me than the words and comments of some of my friends.” -Phil
- “Since endless repetition of information is draining, suggest that the grieving person leave a message on his or her machine announcing pertinent information (time of the memorial service, and so on).” -Amy

For additional wisdom: see pages 84-90 in **The Compassionate Congregation available through Amazon.com or via our website at **www.WisdomoftheWounded.com***