

NOT WHAT TO SAY TO A GRIEVER?

We have a really hard time talking to those that are going through hard things. We typically chose short and dismissive words so we don't feel uncomfortable. Here are some options to consider instead.

If none of these come to mind when you are actively in a conversation. A simple "I don't know what to say but I want to be here with you and for you to know that I care about you."

FIX-IT'S

A good example of a "fix it" is when you start a sentence with "at least..." It is not your job to fix anything or show them the "upside." It is your job to show up and hold on. Statements like "at least you had time" is not supportive, it's minimizing over the pain.

ADVICE

"you just need to..."

"you should..."

Statements like these are dismissive and not helpful. The griever is fully aware of what they should do. They don't need reminders of all the things they cannot do with their loved one anymore.

RATIONALE

"everything happens for a reason"
"it was God's Plan"

There is no ah-ha moments in these statements. There is no comfort in rationale statements. This statement completely dismiss the griever's feelings

RELATING

Also referred to as "one upmanship". Telling griever's "worse" stories don't make them thankful or cheer them up. When we are trying to relate we are taking the attention off them and putting the spotlight on us. It makes griever's feel like they have to console you on top of everything else.

GOOD VIBES

Soaking in positive light is painful. It's like coming out of a dark room and into the bright day. Not all grief is because of a positive loving relationship or because of a relationship at all. Let the griever take the lead and follow their relationship definitions.

THEIR NAME

If they are experiencing the death of a person, don't be afraid to use the person's name. It keeps that person whole and it respects the relationship.

"I heard a joke John would have loved. I'll tell it to you when you are ready!"

FINAL THOUGHTS

Your words matter. So if you cannot find good ones - say so! We often have such a hard time holding silence. A silent walk around the block is helpful, an offer of your office for a private space whenever they need it, an unscheduled break, a modified work schedule. Your offers of help will often be met with "no" - offer anyway.

Be honest. Be open. Be Silent