

What to Say and Do before, during, and long after the funeral.  
What NOT to Say and Do. Practical, detailed instructions to  
help your bereaved friend in an effective way."

How to Help a Grieving Friend

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# How to Help a Grieving Friend

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What to Say



What NOT to Say



What to Do



What NOT to Do



Answer Difficult  
Questions



When Someone  
You Love  
Survives Someone  
They Love

**MARY J. TYNES**

2ND EDITION

# **How to Help a Grieving Friend**

**Second Edition**

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## About the Author

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# Preface

When a friend for whom you care deeply suffers the death of someone they love, you want desperately to help, to comfort. But what can you do? What can you say?

After all, you cannot “fix” the problem. You cannot bring back the loved one who has passed. Every gesture seems insignificant when compared to the grief experienced by your friend. Most people draw a blank in response to those questions simply because creative thoughts do not flow freely in times of stress and crisis.

The good news is that there *are* things you can say and do that will help. Your friend needs your support now. Let’s discuss how you can make a difference.

# Introduction

**How to Help a Grieving Friend** reveals how to help bereaved friends by combining a caring spirit with practical action. The book explains why commonly-encountered phrases and actions may unintentionally hurt. It then offers specific phrases of comfort, as well as appropriate actions which you may take, both immediately and over time.

Because most readers need to absorb this information quickly, the book is concise, clear, and brief. It is formatted for “skimming” if necessary.

The Appendix is a one-page summary. It provides a quick review and may be printed to carry with you if you so desire.

## **Author’s Expertise -- Earned the Hard Way**

At age 18, I had graduated from high school and had a wonderful summer. Only a few weeks before entering Baylor University as a freshman, a series of deaths began.

- I had taken piano lessons from a lovely woman for fourteen years. She died suddenly.
- Next, my cousin Ronny committed suicide by shooting himself.
- I set out for Baylor. Two weeks into the semester, my sister Marty was diagnosed as having a brain tumor. I went home right away to be there for her first operation. That weekend, a friend of mine who was still in high school had a car accident that killed the mother of another friend.
- I returned to school. Three days later, a friend’s father called my dorm room. He needed me to search the campus and find his daughter. She wasn’t in her room and he needed her. Her mother had just committed suicide.
- Two weeks later, my tennis coach’s daughter died. She had been trying to beat a train across a railroad track. She had lost. She was only fourteen.

After each death, I struggled to express my sadness and shock. But how? I felt absolutely inadequate to the task. Nothing I could say would be enough. Nothing I could do would be enough. I simply did not know how to help.

My first college semester ended. While on Christmas break, my sister died.

Suddenly, I was the one who was grieving. I was the one who was inconsolable. As the initial shock of her passing faded, I could feel the familiar frustration and desperation of friends who surrounded me. I probably would not have noticed except that I had felt that way so often during the past four months. I recognized those pained looks on their faces as they stood by me, not knowing how to help.

But many friends *were* helping. Many were saying and doing things that provided relief, understanding and comfort. I promised myself I would remember what helped me so that I wouldn't be so lost the next time I was in that position.



My conscious observation of the support that was offered to me when my sister died provided key insights for helping grieving friends. Those observations also provided me with quite a few examples of what does NOT help. All examples in this book are true of my own experience or the experience of someone I know.

These pages do not hold one-size-fits-all answers or quips that will work magic. You will be given specific phrases that will express your compassion and caring to your friend. **How to Help a Grieving Friend** contains truly helpful actions you may take to give meaningful assistance. Most importantly, this book encourages you to understand the selfless spirit with which these choices should be made, and how to approach those choices in a practical manner.

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