



What To Say (And Not Say) To A Person Who Has Lost A Pet



Grief is a difficult subject for most people including those experiencing it, as well as those who are trying to offer support. However, some of the ways in which support is presented can come across as hurtful, oblivious, or insensitive. This is not because they are intended that way, but because most people are uncertain of what they should do in the face of another person's grief. Thankfully, there is extensive research in the field of grief counseling that has helped to ascertain the dos and don'ts when offering support or assistance to someone who is grieving.

DO...

- 1 *Listen* - people want to be heard and having the chance to share their feelings of grief can be helpful.
- 2 *Share memories* - most people want to talk about the person or pet they are grieving and this can be a nice transition into that.
- 3 *Check-in regularly* - whether it is by text, email, phone call, or snail mail.
- 4 *Offer to "be there"* - telling the person you are here for them if they just want to be in company can be comforting, especially if they are not ready to talk.
- 5 *Send condolences* - the simple statement "I am so sorry for your loss" may be all a person who is grieving needs to hear.
- 6 *Ask what the person needs* - the above statement can be followed by "what can I do"; an open-ended question that invites the person who is grieving to let you know what they might need.

- 1 *Offer platitudes such as "time heals all wounds"* - this can come across as trite and diminish a person's experience.
- 2 *Say things like "they are in a better place"* - the person might share a different idea of what happens after death and this statement can feel irritating.
- 3 *Make suggestions such as "maybe you should get another dog"* - this can lead to further isolation and feelings of "I should be over this by now".
- 4 *Put a timeline on grief* - everyone is unique in their response to grief and there is no "normal" period of time during which someone should recover.
- 5 *Try to fix the other person's feelings* - grief is something that must be experienced in order for healing to take place.
- 6 *Ask about the circumstances surrounding the death* - the events leading up to the loss of a pet, especially if euthanasia is involved, are very personal and it might be triggering to be asked to share them, especially soon after the loss.

DON'T...

