

Conemaugh Regional Hospice



How to help a grieving friend during the Holidays

Ten Practical Ways that You Can Offer Help and Support

The holidays, especially the first ones after a loved one's death, can be especially difficult for a person who is grieving. Friends and family members may be unsure how to act or what to say to support their grieving loved one during the holidays.

In general, the best way to help those who are grieving during the holidays is to let them know you care. They need to be remembered, and they need to know their loved ones are remembered, too. Local hospice grief counselors emphasize that friends and family members should never be afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing, because making an effort and showing concern will be appreciated.

Here are some tips that grieving people have shared:

1. Be supportive of the way your friend chooses to celebrate the holidays. Some may wish to follow traditions; others may choose to change their rituals.
2. Offer to help with tangible tasks such as baking, cleaning or decorating. Seemingly simple tasks can be overwhelming while dealing with grief.
3. Invite the person to attend a religious service with you and your family.
4. Offer to help with holiday shopping or share your favorite catalogs or on-line shopping sites.
5. Invite your friend to your home for the holidays.

continued on back

Conemaugh Regional Hospice

6. Inquire if your friend is interested in volunteering with you during the holiday season. Doing something for someone else, such as helping at a soup kitchen or working with children, may help him or her feel better about the holidays.
7. Make a donation in memory of your friend's loved one, as a reminder that his or her special person is not forgotten.
8. Remember to avoid telling your friend that he or she should be "over it;" grief is an individual process and there are no right or wrong ways to grieve.
9. If your friend wants to talk about the deceased loved one or feelings associated with the loss, LISTEN. Don't worry about being conversational.... just listen.
10. Remind the person you are thinking of him or her and the loved one who died. Cards, phone calls and visits are great ways to stay in touch.

Many people are not aware that their community hospice is a valuable resource that can help people who are struggling with grief and loss. Hospices provide bereavement support to the families they serve and often offer services to other members of the community as well.

Hospice is a philosophy of care for patients with life-limiting illnesses. A team of professionals and trained volunteers offer care and comfort to patients and their families when a cure is no longer possible. Fully covered by Medicare and most insurance companies, hospice services are available at home or in a facility such as a nursing home.

To learn more, go to www.caringinfo.org or call 1-800-658-8898.