

## Master this vital life skill

There's a very important life skill that is not taught in schools, yet it's something that is needed time and again over the course of a lifetime: How to console our friends, work-colleagues and family members who face death, loss or grief.

Loss of a loved one is something we all experience, a shared human experience. But for many of us, talking about death is uncomfortable and can be a barrier to providing support to those who suffer a loss. It may be because we don't know what to say or do; we don't want to intrude; we find it difficult to deal with deep emotions; or it stirs our own grief about our own past or future losses.

Being there when someone needs help is very important – after all, we will all need the same support in our lives, too. Here are some “Dos and Don'ts” from loss counselors that may help to make things a little easier in offering support.

**Do learn about the stages of grief.** It's normal for someone to be depressed or angry. Let them work through it. Expect sadness and tears.

**Don't try to fix things.** You can't.

**Do offer more than words.** Run errands, offer a ride, mind kids, bake a meal or just spend time.

**Don't make it about you or how you feel.** It's about them. Listen with compassion. Validate feelings.

**Do hug the person,** take their hand, or offer a light touch. The warmth of human touch can be healing.

**Don't be judgmental.** Their timeline isn't your timeline. Their way of mourning may not be the same as yours.



**Do help to memorialize the loved one.** Plant a tree, gather photos, share memories or start a fund.

**Don't minimize or explain away the loss.** Avoid platitudes and phrases like “it was his time.”

**Do remember into the future.** Reach out on anniversaries and special days with a call or a card.

Here are some things you can say:

- I'm so sorry for your loss.
- I'm available anytime you need to talk.
- What can I do for you?
- I'm sorry I never had a chance to meet your aunt – she sounds wonderful.
- Your Dad loved you so much, he always talked about you.
- You are in my thoughts and prayers.
- If you knew the person, share a special memory or a trait you admired.

Grief and loss are some of the most common reasons people seek help from their EAP. Remember, if you or a family member experiences the loss of a loved one, call your EAP 24-7 for help, support and tools.