

## A Need to Talk It Out

At times you may have the feeling that “no one understands.” For a period of time after the death, some people will be there to help you; but, as time goes on, you will likely find that fewer people will be as available to you.

You will find that you want to talk about your loved one more than most people seem willing to listen. You will observe people showing their discomfort with your grief reactions.

As time goes by, you will see that more people will refrain from bringing up the death or the name of your loved one. It may seem as if they have either “forgotten” or don’t wish to discuss it.

### **Suggestions:**

Be honest with others yet be aware that some people will respond negatively to your frankness. Let them. As time goes on, support people will mistakenly believe that you need less help rather than more. Many people do not understand grief reactions.

If you tell people exactly how you feel, you may be surprised at the understanding and support you can receive from unexpected sources. Try this with more than one person. Say to a friend, “Do you have some time now in which we can talk for a while about the death? I need someone to just listen to me for a while. You don’t have to say much, OK?”

Choose any of the following that may be helpful at this time: A caring friend, a person at work, self-help organizations, prayer, clergy, a neighbor, counseling, the local crisis center.

A list of suggestions for being a good listener (you may want to show this to some people you know):

- Let the person who is hurting do most of the talking.
- Try to refrain from: analyzing, judging, interrupting, telling the person what to do and how to feel.
- Use of the question, “How do you feel about that?” can bring emotions into focus. Mixed emotions are common.
- Paraphrase - that is, after listening intently for a time, summarize what the person has just said. This has been shown to be a powerful technique for clarifying problems.
- When problem-solving, encourage the speaker to explore all of the alternatives. Ask, “What can you do?” Have them compose a list of possibilities.
- Mention the deceased. Say the name. Bring up stories of this person from the past.
- Call on the bereaved more frequently as time goes by.

In summary, a good listener is caring and permits the sharing of grief without interruption or judgment.

*Source: A Guide for the Bereaved Survivor by Robert Baugher, Ph.D. & Marc Calija*