Supporting someone who is grieving

What helps and what does not when someone you know is bereaved.

Most people worry about saying the wrong thing, so they say nothing or stay away. The bereaved person usually remembers who turned up, not what they said.

What helps

- Saying their name
- "I am so sorry. I do not know what to say."
- Listening to the same story again
- Specific offers: "I will bring dinner on Tuesday"
- Remembering dates
- Keeping in touch after the first weeks
- Letting them be sad

What does not help

- "They are in a better place"
- "At least they had a long life"
- "I know how you feel"
- "You need to be strong"
- "Let me know if you need anything"
- Changing the subject
- Expecting them to be over it

Practical things

- Bring food. Do a school run. Cut the grass.
- Sit with them. You do not need to talk.
- Send a text that needs no reply: "Thinking of you today."
- Invite them along, and do not take a no personally. Ask again.

Later on

Support tends to disappear after the funeral, when the shock wears off and the loss sinks in. The months afterwards, and the first birthday, Christmas and anniversary, are when people need you most. Put the dates in your phone.

If you are worried

If they are not eating or functioning after many weeks, drinking heavily, or talking about not wanting to be here, encourage them gently to see their GP, and offer to go with them. If you think they are in immediate danger, call 112 or 999. Samaritans are on freephone 116 123, day or night.

Look after yourself as well
You may be grieving too.

My notes and questions

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