

# How to Help Someone Experiencing Emotional Distress

## 1 Look for the FACTS:

<b>FEELINGS</b>	Hopelessness, excessive worry, burdensomeness, rejection, worthlessness
<b>ACTIONS</b>	Impulsiveness, self-harm, increased drug or alcohol use, giving away possessions, looking for a way to die such as saving up pills, gaining access to a gun, or searching online
<b>CHANGES</b>	Particularly in the presence of other warning signs; changes in attitude, moods, behaviors, or social connection; sudden change in sleep or eating habits
<b>THREATS</b>	Specific or vague statements or any expression of death or suicide; can be written, spoken, activity on social media, or non-verbal threats
<b>SITUATIONS</b>	Life changes that cause the person to be overwhelmed, unprepared, or triggered, such as personal loss, connection to death, bullying or abuse, failures, or getting in trouble

## 2 Use Active Listening

### DO

**Actively listen.** Allow them to vent and unload their feelings.

**Be sympathetic and non-judgmental.** Encourage them to talk about their feelings, even if it is hard to hear.

**Offer hope.** Reassure them that help is available and suicidal feelings are temporary.

**Take them seriously.** Ask if they are having thoughts of suicide. You are allowing them to share their pain, not giving them ideas.

### DON'T

**Argue.** Avoid saying phrases like: "You have so much to live for", "your suicide will hurt your family" or "snap out of it".

**Promise confidentiality or secrecy.**

**Offer ways to fix problems or give advice.**

## 3 Connect to Help

Call for help immediately in an emergency where there is risk of immediate harm to the person or others. If you are uncomfortable helping it is OK, but you need to tell someone else about your concerns ASAP. You can also connect someone to these resources, through 3-way call if necessary, when things are escalating and you no longer feel comfortable helping alone.

CRISIS TEXT LINE |

Text Got5 to 741-741



Call or text 988  
Chat: 988lifeline.org/chat/



Call 1-866-488-7386  
Text START to 678-678

# Reminders When Coping With Grief

1

**There is no right or wrong way to grieve.** Some people need to distract themselves with work or hobbies. Others need to take time and space to be alone.

2

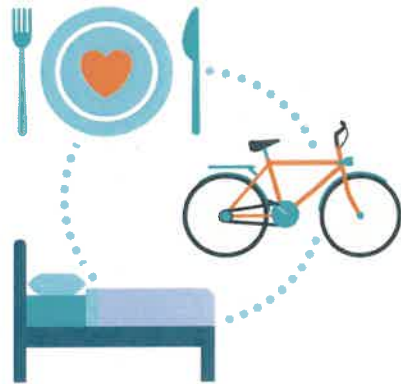
**There is no universal timeline for grief.** Try not to put expectations on yourself about when you “should” stop grieving.

3

**Accept that grief can trigger many emotions.** Acknowledge whatever you are feeling. Grief can appear as sadness, anger, shock, guilt, relief, loneliness and so much more.

4

**Take care of yourself physically, so you can take care of yourself emotionally.** Sometimes our basic needs are most neglected as we grieve. Keep nutritious snacks out in plain sight so you don't forget to eat. Prioritize sleep and make sure to move and stretch your body.



5

**Practice self-compassion.** Release all expectations on how you think you “SHOULD” feel.

6

**The initial grieving period may feel exhausting.** You may even feel distracted and forgetful. Don't set big goals. Help yourself by writing things down or asking others to help.

7

**Stay active.** Exercise can help you release emotional energy in a healthy way.

8

**Grief can feel isolating.** Reaching out to a support group, friend or family member can help.

9

**Plan ahead for upcoming dates that may trigger grief.** Anniversaries, holidays, and birthdays may be particularly challenging. Finding a way to stay supported and mindful on these days can help.

10

**Try calming strategies.** Consider deep breathing, prayer, yoga, meditation— whatever may fit for your lifestyle.


11

**Reach out to a professional if you are feeling overwhelming depression.** Tele-therapy options can help you process emotions from the comfort of home.



Office of  
Mental Health

## Ten Tips for Helping Others Grieve



**1** **Immediately acknowledge the loss.** Reach out to say, “I am so sorry for your loss.” Don’t be nervous. It doesn’t matter if you know the bereaved or the deceased well, just reach out.

**2** **Do not minimize the loss or try to “take away” the pain.**

**3** **Avoid statements like: “He/she is in a better place” or “I know how you feel.”**


**4** **Know that grief is not linear.** People often cycle between the different stages of grieving.



**5** **Focus on the person grieving.** Don’t compare your experiences. Allow the person to navigate their own grief.

**6** **Don’t judge how the bereaved is reacting.** Everyone grieves differently. There is nothing wrong with how they are feeling or coping.

**7** **Don’t rush the process.** Everyone grieves at a different pace. There is no timeline to “move on” or “get over it”.



**8** **Allow for crying and silences.** Expressing emotions is healthy. Resist the urge to fill silence with words.

**9** **Lend a helping hand.** Instead of saying, “Let me know how I can help,” tell them what you will do. For example: “I’ll be by to mow your lawn on Tuesday.”

**10** **People who are grieving often forget to take care of themselves.** Have groceries delivered or send a gift basket with items to help them take care of their basic needs.



# JUST CHECKING IN



We want to make it easy to check in on each other.  
These tips can help you have a supportive conversation.

## HOW TO ASK: Different Ways to Start a Conversation about Mental Wellness

**Ask genuinely.** There are no special words. Being authentic is more important than what you say.

“Just wanted to check in with you.  
How are you doing?”

**Ask directly.** Letting someone know you want to hear about mental health can help them feel okay about opening up to you.

“Just checking in. You seem a little  
down today. How are you doing?”

**Share how you are first.** Being open about your struggles can help normalize what others are going through.

“I’ve really been anxious lately with every-  
thing that is going on. How have you been?”

**Ask about today.** It can be overwhelming to think about your overall emotional health if you are struggling. Focusing on the moment can be helpful.

“How are you feeling today?  
How are you feeling right now?”

**Ask regularly.** If you think someone is struggling, make it an expected part of the conversation that you’ll ask how they are, even if they don’t want to talk that day.

“I just wanted to check in on how you  
are doing today. I’m thinking of you.”

**Talk to them about things other than mental health too.** Connect over other aspects of your relationship.

“This meme made me think of you!”

## HOW TO ANSWER: Different Ways to Respond to Someone Who is Struggling

**Stay calm.** If someone lets you know they are having a hard time, it is because they trust you to listen. You don’t need any special skills other than being yourself.

“Thanks for sharing that. Tell me  
more about what’s going on.”

**Ask follow-up questions.** Let them know you are interested by asking for more information.

“How long have you been feeling like this? What  
kinds of things have been helpful or not helpful?”

**Validate their feelings.** Comparing their situation to other people or letting them know why things aren’t so bad is not helpful. Acknowledge that they aren’t ok.

“That sounds really hard.”

**Be open about your own struggles without comparing.** Normalizing mental health challenges is helpful.

“I’ve been having a lot of anxiety lately too.”

**Check back in regularly.** Let them know they’re on your mind.

“I’ve been thinking about you since  
we talked. How are you doing today?”

**Find ways to stay connected.** Social connection is critical for mental health.

“I’m thinking of having a virtual watch party  
for our favorite series this week. What night  
works best for you?”