

# HELPING A FRIEND THROUGH GRIEF

by Kelly Baltzell M.A. &  
Karin Baltzell Ph.D.



*When a friend experiences a death in their life many of us do not know the appropriate response. Do we talk to our friend about the death? Is it okay to go to their home or will you just be in the way? A friend is a valuable asset in a grieving individual's life. You could help your friend more than you know.*





# "HELPING A FRIEND THROUGH GRIEF"

*by Kelly Baltzell M.A. & Karin Baltzell Ph.D.*

1. **Talk to your friend on an intimate level about their loss:** Talking about the death will probably be important to your friend. Do not be afraid to talk on a deep intimate level with your friend about the loss. Listen and be non-judgmental.
2. **Give options on how you can help:** People in grief cannot think clearly. Instead of asking how can I help you? give specific items on how you can help. For example, "Can I mow the lawn? Do your laundry? Pick up people from the airport?"
3. **Make outreaches to your friend:** Grief can last up to three years after a death. Make an effort to reach out to your friend during this time. The grieving person does not always have the strength to reach out to others.
4. **Remember anniversaries:** After the funeral many people forget when a person died. Your friend will not have forgotten. Important dates to remember are the first, second, and third year after the death, birthdays, wedding anniversaries, holidays, the day the deceased became sick, and any other special day that was important to your friend and the deceased.
5. **Spend time with your friend:** Most likely, your friend will not call you. Grieving people often have little energy. Reaching out to make contact and saying, "Can you come over and be with me today?" is most likely difficult or impossible. Take the initiative to spend time with your friend.
6. **Know your friend is going to change:** Death and grief changes a person. Their world as they knew has been changed. Usually a death brings many other losses. Do not be angry or dismayed when you see the changes happening.
7. **Watch for depression:** Grief and depression are not the same. Grief is normal. It happens after a death. Depression is a change in the chemical make-up of the brain. Warning signs your friend may be depressed are: sleeping all day, major weight gain or loss, lack of interest in activities that once were fun, and thoughts of suicide. Take all self-destructive conversations seriously. Call 911 or take your friend to the Emergency room.
8. **Be an exercise buddy:** Offer to start working out with your friend. Exercise helps with grieving and sadness. Even going for a walk once a week may give you a great chance to spend some quality time with your friend and get some exercise at the same time.
9. **Do special things:** People tend to stop making contact with a grieving person a few weeks after the death. Do little special things for your friend. This could be from giving cards and flowers to offering to help weed the garden or cook a meal.
10. **Let them cry:** Crying is a natural part of grieving. Some people are uncomfortable and do not know what to do when a person is crying. Let them cry. Bring them some tissue and listen. Crying will make your friend feel better.