



CALL IF YOU NEED ANYTHING

A recently bereaved client said, "People are always telling me to call if I need anything. I have so little energy to ask for what I really want. I wish I had a list of things that people could do. I'd give out a copy to those who want to help and people could be "truly helpful."

Here's a list that you can use.

- Remain in contact with me. Don't try to avoid mentioning my loss or the name of the person who died.
- Call to let me know that you are bringing over a favorite meal or dish. Items that can be frozen for serving later are especially appreciated.
- I am in pain. Ask me how it is going only when you have the time and are open to hearing how bad I think it is.
- Allow me to let my feelings out. My frustration and anger might be difficult to listen to. It will pass. Be honest with me if you have had enough.
- Suggest counseling or a support group and provide me with names and phone numbers when I can follow up.
- The idea of going shopping can seem unmanageable. Call me for my grocery list and make a special delivery to my home.
- Don't be afraid to see me or my family. Your support is one of the most valuable parts of my recovery.
- Continue to call and ask even if I say "no". One day I will say "yes" and will be grateful that you are still there for me.
- My pain may remind you of your losses. Cry or rage with me. You are not in pain for me; you are in pain for yourself.
- Holidays, anniversaries and other special occasions may trigger my grief. Call me and find out what my plans are.

- When you are unsure about what is going on with me, say just that.
- Ask if I feel like talking about my experience. I don't always want to talk.
Your support can be felt by your silent company.
- Drop me a note to let me know that you are thinking about me. There are times when everyone else seems to be back to normal and I am the only one who is still thinking about my loss.
- I have not suddenly become mentally defective. Include me in decision making.
- Chores such as cleaning, watering plants, and caring for the yard may be too much for me. Offer to do a specific job on a particular day.
- Survivors rely on strategies for healing and comfort that have served them in the past. Find out about my sources of comfort. You might think about your own sources of comfort, and describe them to me. And remember that what works for you may not be appropriate to me.

Source: DeSpelder, Lynne Ann; Home Hospice (A program of VNA & Hospice of Northern California)