

Living Through Loss Counselling Society of BC

#206-1651 Commercial Drive Vancouver, BC V5L 3Y3

Fax: 604-873-5002 PHONE: 604-873-5013

Email: ltlc@shaw.ca Web Site: www.ltlc.bc.ca

HELPING A GRIEVER

Grieving is a natural reaction to a loss and it takes time and effort to adjust to the change. Counsellors, family, friends and co-workers can be more effective when helping the griever, if they know what helps and what doesn't. As helpers we should be aware that the grief process is not smooth – it moves back and forth from shock to acute grief.

1. Refrain from rationalizing and intellectualizing someone's grief, be there in their experience, use empathy not sympathy.
2. The griever needs supportive, non-judgmental caring, and a willing listener.
3. Allow the griever to review and re-review the loss of the relationship and or the circumstances of the loss.
4. Crucial to the process is allowing expression of all emotions including guilt and shame.
5. It is important to instill the hope that life will get better again.
6. Help the griever to understand their process is unique and cannot be compared.
7. Help the griever to understand that their life does not need to be joyless.
8. Encourage the griever to become an active participant in their grief in order to gain some control by:
 - Encouraging creative grief e.g. journaling, drawing, reading etc.
 - Encouraging physical health e.g. eating properly, exercising, getting enough rest
9. Give information about support groups or counselling if needed.

Living Through Loss Counselling Society of BC

#206-1651 Commercial Drive Vancouver, BC V5L 3Y3

Fax: 604-873-5002 PHONE: 604-873-5013

Email: ltlc@shaw.ca Web Site: www.ltlc.bc.ca

Responses that are helpful to the griever:

Acknowledge the loss with a simple statement of sympathy such as:

- “I’m very sorry to hear of your loss” (separation, divorce, illness or death in the family)
- “I’m very sorry to hear of _____’s death, what can I do to help?”
- “Please accept my sympathy.”
- “I don’t know what to say except I’m sorry this has happened”.
- “I can’t know how you feel, but I want to help you in any way I can.”
- “Tell me how I can help you”.

Responses that are not helpful to the griever:

- Suggesting that the person has grieved long enough and should ‘pull up their socks and get on with their life’.
- Discouraging crying.
- Not letting the griever talk about the loss or changing the subject.
- Suggesting that the person is doing ‘so well’ by displaying no visible signs of grief.
- Excluding the griever from social activities.