

# How do you help when one of your friends experiences a loss?

Here are some things you might be able to do:

- Encourage your friend to find a calm safe space. The grieving process requires time to calm down and think. A quiet place with decreased noise and distraction will help with healing. This might be a natural environment like a garden or park, or a comforting familiar place such as a library or bedroom.
- Provide a consistent respectful relationship. People going through a deep loss need someone to listen to them, comfort them, and appreciate their sadness. Ask about feelings and allow your friend to cry or be angry. Be a truly good listener. Offer a simple touch, a smile, an expression of sympathy.
- Help your friend stay involved with friends or activities. Being with others is important, just as time alone is necessary. Include your friend in your usual, normal activities. It's okay to be upbeat and do enjoyable things. Time spent with good friends can be very healing. Music and activity can help us get through difficult times.
- Help your friend develop a sense of purpose. Even hard times can lead to life lessons or new skills. If the time seems right, ask your friend to tell the healing story of what has been learned from this experience. Healing stories might also include remembering the good times with the person they're missing.
- Believe that people can get through really hard times. Sadness can lead to a deeper understanding of ourselves and others. Through pain we learn empathy and kindness and appreciation for what remains. After the loss of a parent, your friend might look for who is left to love (brothers or sisters?) and help care for them. Help your friend find some activities that give life meaning, even in the midst of anger, self-doubt, tears and joy. You might even offer to do these activities with your friend!
- Encourage adult help if needed. Be watchful about how they are doing and help your friend seek out a qualified counselor, or trusted adult if the emotions are too difficult to bear. You can also talk to your own parents, a counselor or other trusted adult if you are not sure how to help.

One of the most important things to remember is just to be a friend. Stay in touch, keep talking & inviting to activities even if your friend says no. There will come a time when they are ready and say yes!