



Hi friend,

It's challenging to know what to do for a grieving friend or family member. Grief is tough to navigate, period. With that in mind, we've put together some tips for supporting a griever who is enduring a close, life-changing loss. These are suggestions from our family, our online community, and our in-depth interviews with grievers. This is not an exhaustive list, but we hope you may find these materials helpful for you and your network. Feel free to skip over any items not relevant for your situation. We have additional resources on our website, www.lunapeakfoundation.org.

Being a supporter to a grieving family member/friend is a tough job. Please know you're not alone.



Some Notes on Grief and Loss

Grief can fundamentally change the lives of griever. While the loss itself presents a harsh change, secondary losses such as loss of identity, financial changes, relocations, etc. are also notable changes occurring alongside the loss. Grievers might change in many ways through this process. Showing up for them as their grief journey begins and develops is a great gift you can provide.

Grief is commonly referred to as an extension of love for the person you've lost. While the deceased may not be physically present, the love and relationship remains.

Similarly, grief does not have a timeline. There is no time limit for someone to "get over" their grief. Instead, grievers learn to "move forward" with their grief.

Grief can look different on everyone. Sometimes grief is hidden, and sometimes grief can be physically observed. Some may want to be private, some may want to share all about their loved one and relationship, and some may fall somewhere in between. Their preferences may be different than what you may assume or think your grieving friend/family member wants, and that is OK. Rolling with the punches and showing up for your griever can take many forms, and their preferences might change over time too.

Grief is very much a solo journey. However, offering support and sharing the heavy weight of grief can be comforting and an immense help in a griever's healing journey.

Top Considerations

Pay attention to their social cues. Picking up on verbal and nonverbal cues can be helpful to know what is helpful and unhelpful for them. Everyone grieves differently, and grief is unpredictable. Some types of support may be helpful at different times for grievers, so keep that in mind.

Hang in there with them. Try to stay flexible. Supporting grief is a very challenging and ever-changing role. Be open to learning about grief and specifically how your griever expresses themselves. Having a consistent and loving support system no matter what twists and turns happen in grief is an incredible gift for a griever.

Write down important dates in their grief. Sometimes this is a death anniversary, their loved one's birthday, their birthday, or the date of the last time they saw their loved one, for example. If you are not sure, you may want to try asking them directly so you can best support them in the future. Keeping these dates handy can help you structure your support and also help you acknowledge their loss at extra heavy moments.

Customize for your relationship. You know your relationship with your griever best. Take this packet with a grain of salt. Showing up for your person may require some flexibility and creativity, depending on your relationship.

Take care of yourself too. Grief is exhausting for all involved. Give yourself grace when you say the wrong thing - we have all said the wrong thing at some point - yes, even grievers to one another. Having said that, try to stay attentive and implement changes as needed and as you learn. Being open to changing your approach is an important part of supporting a griever.

Tangible Support Ideas - \$

- Send something they like - do they have a favorite food or dessert that you can send to them?
- Send an early grief care package - including tissues, eye drops, hand sanitizer, hand lotion, eye mask for sleeping, pen and pad of paper, snacks. Some ideas for comforting items: spa face mask, a fuzzy blanket, cozy socks.
- Buy gift cards for them to use later - for example, gift cards from a grocery or convenient store, or a local restaurant.
- Send food from a local restaurant or use a food delivery service.
- Send a cleaning service gift certificate or help schedule an appointment if the griever is open to that.
- Send a book about grief and/or a journal so they can start to process and express themselves.
- Send them something silly to make them smile - something that has nothing to do with grief to escape with - perhaps an entertaining book, a movie, or a magazine, etc.

Tangible Support Ideas - \$0

Send a handwritten note or email - share how you will show up for them, share a memory you have together or inside jokes to make them smile.

Volunteer to do their laundry for them.

Volunteer to help them clean their house.

Volunteer to help run errands.

Volunteer to pick up food for them.

Volunteer to help them compile a to do list for the tough logistical things they need to get done in the wake of the loss.

Volunteer to help drive them to do hard things such as going to and from the memorial, or running logistical errands post loss such as going to the bank or various appointments.

Volunteer to help them go through their loved one's items if they are open to it (this is sometimes an intimate thing; do not be offended if they decline and want privacy).

Intangible Support Ideas - \$0

- If applicable, share a memory about their loved one if you have one. Depending on your relationship and situation, share what you admired about their loved one or share about what you admired about the relationship they shared.
- If applicable, send them any photos of their person if you have any.
- Send an email full of links to make them laugh or smile - YouTube videos, music videos, funny TikTok links, photos, or memes for example.
- Make a playlist for them.
- If they are interested, perhaps you can help them look up a local grief support group or therapist.

The Art of the Check In - \$0

Consider checking in before, and/or on, important dates in their grief.

Try to find out what type of check-ins are preferred (for example, email, text, calling, or in person).

Let them know that you are thinking of them.

Try to avoid platitudes and be upfront with the situation. For example “I’m sorry this happened to you,” “I wish you were not going through this,” “This sucks,” “I know there is nothing I can say to change this situation,” or even “I don’t know what to say” can feel more authentic.

Do not expect a response when you reach out, and consider starting off your check-in by saying/texting that you are not expecting a response.

Suggest ways they can count on you to show up for them - be honest in ways that you are able to show up for them (either physically or emotionally). Phrases such as “let me know what I can do to help” can be modified to “I can am available to help you with XYZ.” Including your own options may help the griever decide, as opposed to putting the responsibility on them to figure out what they may need during an already overwhelming time.



If you have found these pages helpful, please consider making a tax deductible donation to Luna Peak Foundation. Donations and book sales allow us to run programs, events, and serve individuals and families in the cancer and grief communities.

Additional Resources:
www.lunapeakfoundation.org

Instagram:
[@LunaPeakFoundation](https://www.instagram.com/LunaPeakFoundation)

Grief Instagram:
[@SnapshotsOfLifeAfterLoss](https://www.instagram.com/SnapshotsOfLifeAfterLoss)

Luna Peak Grief Books:
www.lunapeakpublishing.com

