

## NEWLY BEREAVED - HOW FRIENDS CAN HELP *By Virginia Simpson*

FRIENDS SUPPORT GUIDE For those of you who have lost a loved one, especially a child, you will relate to the following list of 10 things to guide your friends through the tough times. Please share this information with others so they will know not only how to act... but most important, too act! Don't avoid us!

1. I am not strong. I'm just numb. When you tell me I'm strong, I feel you don't see me.
2. I will not recover. This is not a cold or the flu. I'm not sick. I'm grieving and that's different. I will not always be grieving as intensely, but I will never forget my loved one. Rather than recover, I want to incorporate his life and love into the rest of my life. That person is a part of me and always will be, and sometimes I remember him with joy and other times with tears. Both are ok.
3. I don't have to accept the death. Yes, I have to understand that it has happened and it is real, but there are just some things in life that are not acceptable.
4. Please don't avoid me. You can't catch my grief. My world is painful, and when you are too afraid to call me or visit or say anything, you isolate me at a time when I most need to be care about. If you don't know what to say, just come over, give me a hug or touch my arms, and gently say, "I'm sorry." You can even say, "I just don't know what to say, but I care, and want you to know that."
5. Please don't call to complain about your husband, your wife, or your children. Right now, I'd be delighted to have my loved one here, no matter what they were doing.
6. Please don't say, "Call me if you need anything." I'll never call you because I have no idea what I need. Trying to figure out what you could do for me takes more energy than I have. So, in advance, let me give you some ideas: **A-** Bring food **B-** Offer to take my children to a movie or game so I have some moments to myself **C-** Send me a card on special holidays, birthdays (mine, his or hers), or the anniversary of his death and make sure you mention his or her name. You can't make me cry. The tears are here and I will love you for giving me the opportunity to shed them because someone cared enough about me to reach out on this difficult day. **d.** Ask me more than once to join you at the movies or lunch. I may say "no" at first or even for a while, but please don't give up on me because somewhere down the line, I may be ready, and if you've given up then I really will be alone.
7. Try to understand that this is like I'm in a foreign country where I don't speak the language and have no map to tell me what to do. Even if there were a map, I'm not sure I could understand what it was saying. I'm lost and in a fog. I'm confused.
8. When you tell me what I should be doing, then I feel even more lost and alone. I feel bad enough that my loved one is dead, so please don't make it worse by telling me I'm not doing this right.
9. Please don't tell me that I can have other children or need to start dating again. I'm not ready. And maybe I don't want to. And besides, what makes you think people are replaceable? They aren't. Whoever comes after will always be someone different.
10. I don't even understand what you mean when you say, "You've got to get on with your life." My life is going on, but it may not look the way you think it should. This will take time and I never will be my old self again. So please just love me as I am today, and know, that with your love and support, the joy will slowly return to my life. But I will never forget – and there will always be times that I cry...