

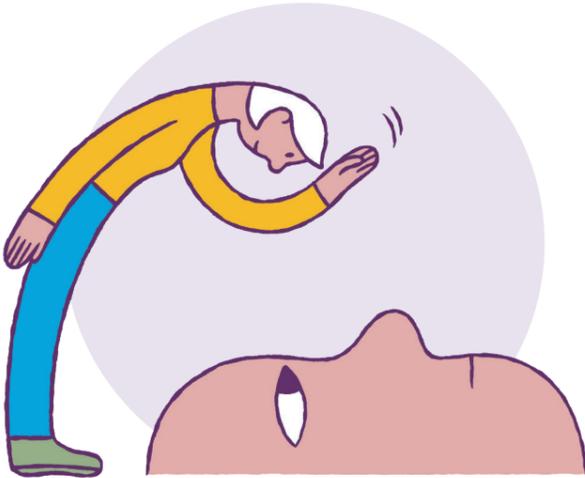


First Aid for Grief

What is first aid for grief?

It is hard to be alone when you are grieving. That is why the church has collected ideas and specific tips that make it a little easier for us as fellow human beings to be there for someone who is in mourning. Grief is painful, but sharing can make the burden of grief more bearable. These tips are meant to be of help in the first period of mourning when someone suffers a loss.

All grief is unique, and there are no absolute truths or instructions that can be applied. This is perhaps the reason why many people feel uncertain when coming face to face with another person's grief. With these tips, the Church of Norway hopes to help more people feel a little more secure and better prepared, so that no one is left alone with their grief.



Make contact

Don't burden the grieving person with the responsibility of making contact. Avoid saying things like "Call me if there is anything I can do, I'm here for you" as it may be very difficult for the grieving person to take initiative. It's better to say, "I'll call you again on Tuesday, answer if you are able to do so." Sometimes the grieving person won't answer us when we call. He or she may not always be up to talking to anyone – but we can always call back, and continue to do so.



Break the silence

For many of us, it might be difficult to reach out to a fellow human being who is grieving. We're uncertain about what to say. We might fear awkward silence, or that the person starts crying. The important thing is not always what we say, but that we break the silence. Sometimes an SMS is a better option than a telephone call, as it can be easier to send and reply.



Give space

Many people might be mourning the same loss. They have had their own relationship and history with the person who passed away. It is important that we allow those closest to the deceased to be in focus. We must remember to allow the emotions of those in grief, whatever those emotions may be, to be the ones that matter. Our thoughts and memories are also important – but not the most important in these situations.



Take the initiative

Suggest to do a regular, everyday activity, e.g. invite the person for a coffee, watch a movie, or go for a walk. Many who are in mourning, long for a break from the grief and the opportunity to do ordinary things. Bear in mind that the person we invite may say no, and that's all right. – The important thing is that we ask – and that we keep on asking.



Be present

Many of us are afraid of being pushy, and this might result in us not making contact at all. We might think that the person in mourning needs to be left alone, or we want to wait for a while until "the worst has passed", before we contact someone. It is important that we clearly show that we are available, so that the person in grief doesn't feel isolated, left out or ignored.



Be patient

Everyone has their own grieving process, we need to understand this and show patience with those grieving. We may run the risk of trying to console the grief away, or show frustration when it endures for a long time. Grief has no expiration date, and there is no normal or abnormal length of the grieving process. Some matters simply need to be repeated. It's all right to let your fellow human dwell that which has happened. This might be an important part of understanding and processing the grief.

