

64 of the Best Things Ever Said to a Griever From *What's Your Grief* Blog



People ask us this question time and again: what should I say to someone grieving? They ask as though there is some easy answer, some checklist. I have bad news, there is no checklist. We asked WYG readers recently for the best and worst things anyone had said to them in their grief, hoping some specific examples might offer guidance. No surprise, there were some of the **EXACT SAME PHRASES** on both the best and worst list. Why is it so tricky? What is right for one person is all wrong for another. The timing can make all the difference, so you could just pick the wrong moment. You might be the right person to say something to one friend or family member, but the wrong person to say it to another. Eleanor made a super graphic about this over in the post of the [64 Worst Things Ever Said to a Griever](#), so make sure you check that out if you missed it.

In case that isn't enough of a disclaimer, before we dive into the list of "best things" we are going to give some of our favorite tried and true quick tips to consider before opening your mouth to someone grieving. They aren't surefire rules to make sure you say the right thing, but they are somewhere to start.

WHAT TO SAY (AND WHAT TO AVOID) WHEN SOMEONE IS GRIEVING

Avoid

Looking for a bright side.
(pro-tip: if you're thinking of saying 'at least' just stop!)

Forcing common experience.
(pro-tip: you don't know how they feel, even if you've been through it)

Offering unsolicited advice
(pro-tip: if the person grieving didn't ask what you think they need or should do, keep your thoughts to yourself).

Projecting into the future.
(pro-tip: if you are thinking about suggesting that it will get easier, that they will meet someone else, or that time heals all wounds, DON'T)

Instead

Acknowledge the pain, don't minimize or look for the silver lining.

Acknowledge their pain and remind them that you are there and will listen. Share memories and stories.

Listen and offer support with what identify as their needs. Only offer advice if you have a concern for the person's safety and well-being.

Be present and open to the pain they are experiencing. Get comfortable with difficult emotions and affirm they do not need to hide them or rush them.

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As for what the best things are to say to someone grieving, the interesting thing you'll see is the items on this list aren't always very specific. They are often general statements or ways of being. We think this is worth noting. Though people get caught up in the "right" words to make someone feel better, often the best things aren't words of comfort at all (we all know those can go astray quickly, however well-intentioned!). They are an acknowledgment of pain, remembrance, and an ability to be present. So, without further ado . . .

1. *"There are no words"*
2. *"I will travel to you and stay with you several days"*
3. *"You can talk to me about your mum whenever you want – in 5, 10, 30 years"*
4. *"Your grief-reactions are normal/appropriate"*.
5. *"You aren't going crazy"*
6. *"Tell me more about your mother"*
7. Someone gave me a very sincere compliment on how I've handled raising my kids as a single mother a few years after my husband died. Meant the world to me to hear it. It's a lonely journey. I needed that boost.
8. *"I'm just really sorry you've had to go through this"*. She kept her gaze into my eyes as I sobbed... It was so powerful just being "witnessed"
9. *"Your Dad was a wonderful man"*.
10. *"Learn to live in acceptance of the loss, not in spite of the loss"*
11. *"She's just made a change of address"*
12. *"Grief has no expiration date"*
13. *"It's okay to have bad days because it reminds you how much you love them and the good days remind you they're right there with you"*.
14. *"Just talk about your son whenever you feel like"*
15. *"You don't have to talk. I will just sit beside you"*.
16. My 81-year-old Father drove quite a distance to just sit with me and as he sat listening to me completely fall apart he reached over and put his arm around me and quietly said, *"please know this is only temporary you will get to finish raising him one day. Then he said, I will get there before you and I will carry your messages to him"*.
17. *"We've asked your colleagues and they have donated enough paid time off for you to take the time you need"*
18. *"We were just talking about him last night"*
19. *"We remember him and speak of him often"*
20. *"When you feel that she's with you know that she really is"*
21. *"She is never far away"*
22. *"Let me know if I can help"*

23. *"I'm sorry for your loss"*
24. When someone tells you they are there for you, brings you flowers or comfort food, or your best friend comes over after you've told her not to (because you didn't want to be a bother) because she knows you that well – those are the types of things that make a difference.
25. *"I was really mad at God when I found out"*
26. *"It f#&king sucks"*
27. *"We won't forget him"*
28. *"He was such a special kid"*
29. *"I don't know what to say but I can listen"*
30. *"He would be proud of you"*
31. *"I am praying for you and will always be"*
32. *"I love you"*
33. *"Thank you for giving us the most beautiful, generous, loving person we've ever known".*
34. *"We loved her like she was one of the family".*
35. *"You've been a good dad to them"*
36. When my Mom passed a good friend of mine looked me in the eye and with such love and concern said *"I am worried about you. I think you should consider grief therapy."* I did so because of her genuine concern and courage to say that to me at the time
37. *"One day you will be talking about Jessica and a smile will come to your face first before a tear"*
38. The best thing was from a chaplain who gave me permission to be mad as hell and instead of asking 'why me?' Asking 'why not me?'
39. My mom made me socks and a hat for my baby gone-too-soon in pregnancy. She said, *"every baby deserves to be celebrated, no matter how long they are with us."*
40. *"A part of your loved one lives in you and all those he loved"*
41. *"Be as kind to yourself as you are to everyone else"*
42. I received a card from a former college classmate of my husband. In the card she wrote about how proud my husband had been of me and how happy I had made him. She wrote that every time their paths crossed over the years that he always spoke so highly of me. She was in awe of how proud he was to have me as his wife.
43. *"You will never get 'over it', but you will get through it"*
44. *"I can see by these pictures how much you loved each other. She must have known every day she was loved".*
45. *"There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Your life has been changed forever".*

46. *"You're allowed to feel and be exactly as you are because this is your experience and no one else's".*
47. *"I wouldn't be alive today if your dad hadn't helped me get sober by giving me a reason to be sober".*
48. The best thing is when someone says, *"I remember..."* and then goes on to share a memory of the person you've lost.
49. *"I cannot possibly understand how you feel. But I'm here".*
50. When I told a friend my heart is broken she said *"I will lend you mine til yours has mended"*
51. *"It's okay not to be okay"*
52. *"Look for signs. He will show you he is with you"* [from another grieving mom]
53. *"He/she is with you always, and is proud of you for the way you live your life"*
54. I love when someone hears a song that reminds them of him & they reach out to tell me!
55. *"Come rest a minute – let's talk about & remember all those sweet memories. Your dad was a great man & father".*
56. *"We'll get through this together"*
57. *"Now you've got someone up there watching out for you"*
58. *"It's okay to hurt. Don't hold back your tears"*
59. *"I have no words, this just sucks"*
60. *"What the F*^k? how can this be?"*
61. *"He was so loved and my life is better because he was in it".*
62. *"You are a good mother and his death with never change that"*
63. *"You are not moving on you are moving forward"*
64. The woman cleaning out my father's absolutely vile condo, when I admitted how embarrassing I found the state of his living space and apologized to her said, *"I don't judge. Everyone has different priorities. He was clearly a wonderful father who was deeply loved."*