10 Worst Things to Say to a Grieving Person

If you want to be consoling and compassionate when offering condolence, avoid phrases like the following:

1. "Stop crying; you're only making it worse." Expressing emotions, even strongly if so inclined, is a natural, normal, and healthy reaction to death.

2. "You should let your emotions out or you'll feel worse later." It's also normal for some people to not cry; not showing outward emotions doesn't mean the person is grieving less or will have some kind of "delayed reaction."

3. "At least he's not suffering anymore." This offers little condolence. Whatever the circumstances of the death, the bereaved person is still suffering.

4. "You must be strong." (Or "God never gives us more than we can handle.") Such statements imply that it's wrong to feel bereft, which is a perfectly natural response.

5. "God must have wanted her." No mortal can purport to know God's purpose. People who don't believe in God might also bristle at your presumption in attaching a religious significance to the loss.

6. "Don't dwell on it." It's normal and natural -- as well as helpful -- to talk about the person who died.

7. "I know exactly how you feel." In fact, you can't. Even if you've experienced a similar loss, you're not the bereaved person, and you didn't have the same relationship to the person who died.

8. "At least he was old enough to live a full life." How old would old "enough" be?

9. "You're lucky. At least [you have money, you're young and attractive, etc.]." Loss is always horrible. Comparing misfortunes to others' or to alternate scenarios won't make the person feel better.

10. "It's been [six months, one year, etc.]; it's time to move on." People never stop grieving for a lost loved one. Affixing a deadline to mourning is insensitive and does little to help people learn to live through their loss.

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