

Table 16-4a: Supporting the Bereaved during the Grief Process

What NOT to Say	Because
“I know just how you feel.”	Even if others experienced a similar loss, every relationship is unique. No one knows exactly how the bereaved feel.
“You’ll get over this in time.”	People do not “get over” their grief. They can learn to manage it and learn to adjust to life. Many bereaved equate “getting over it” with forgetting their loved one.
“Don’t cry.”	Though meant as reassuring, this is often perceived by the bereaved as an attempt to “shut down” their grief.
“It was God’s will.” Or “God knows best.”	This can offend nonreligious people and even religious people may not be comforted by this. Avoid clichés.
“You can have another child.” Or “You’ll find someone else.”	The idea of replacing the loved one is abhorrent to the bereaved.
“If you need anything, call me.”	This puts the effort on the bereaved. Since most people experience decreased energy during bereavement, they are unlikely to call.
“You should be glad s/he didn’t suffer more.”	The length of time a person suffers is irrelevant to the bereaved; their focus is on the death of that loved one.