

Table 16-4b: Supporting the Bereaved during the Grief Process (continued)

What to Say	Because
"I'm sorry."	Acknowledges the loss. A lack of response or acknowledgement is hurtful to the bereaved.
"I don't know how you feel but I do care about you." "I'm sorry that you are hurting." "I can't imagine what you are going through right now."	Acknowledges the pain the bereaved is experiencing and affirms your care for them.
"Go ahead and cry. It's okay. I'm here for you."	Gives permission for expression of grief and offers reassurance of support.
Refer to the deceased by name.	Bereaved often fear that people will forget their loved one. It does not upset them more to hear the name of the deceased; the worst has already happened.
Share specific stories that you remember about the deceased.	Validates the importance of the life of their loved one. Offers reassurance that the person will not be forgotten.
Use open-ended questions: "How has losing your partner to AIDS affected you?"	Allows for individualized responses.
Use superlative phrases in questions: "What has been the worst part for you?" "What has been most helpful?"	Encourages the bereaved to prioritize and focus.
Use third-person statements to initiate the conversation: "Some people tell me that coping with loneliness is the most difficult thing for them. What has it been like for you?" <i>or</i> "Many people tell me they find it difficult to concentrate. What has your experience been?"	Normalizes grief responses but also invites individualized responses.

Sources: References 1, 24, and 35.