

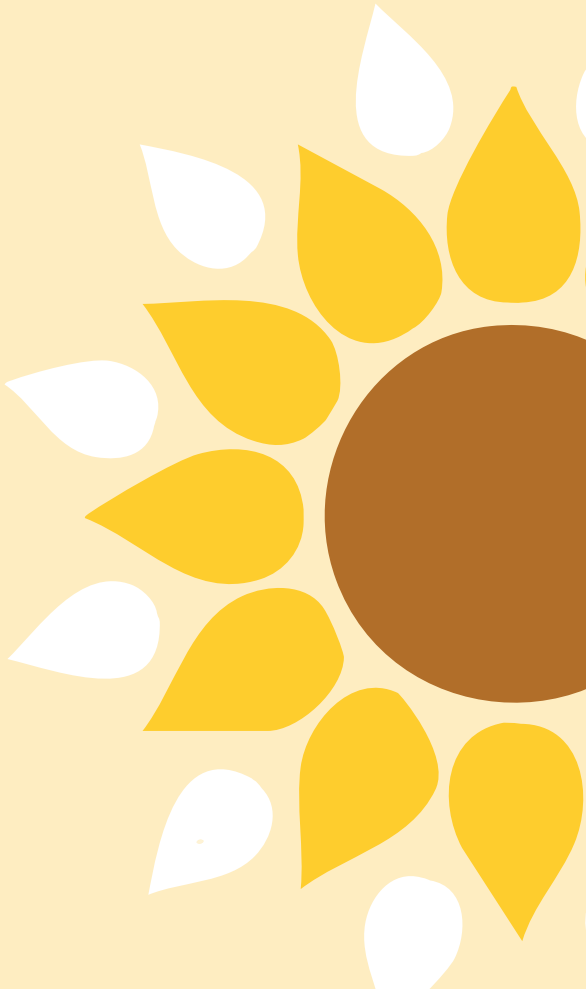
HIGHMARK.

CARING PLACE 

finding hope in grief

Caring for  
a grieving friend

# The gift of being there



# Deep listening for connection and presence

Close friends of grievors often ask themselves, “What can I do to help?” The first and best thing you can do is just be there for them.

## Being there:

**to listen.** *If they want to talk about the person who died.*

**to sit with them.** *Even if they don’t feel like talking at all.*

**to offer a hug.** *Right after a death, and consistently afterward.*

Being there includes a visit, an email check-in, a text, or a hand-written card. Grieving people often appreciate it when friends make specific plans to connect.

People often feel like there’s so little they can do, they pass up the chance to reach out. They figure, “My friend just wants to be left alone.” But with a little knowledge, you can figure out what to say and do.



# Supporting a grieving friend

When a friend is devastated by loss, they're overwhelmed, at first and over time. Here are some things to keep in mind while you're with them.

**Expect all emotions.** Your friend may feel sad one moment and angry the next. Relieved, then confused. Reassure them that all these emotions are natural and valid.

**Explore memories.** Many grieving people are longing to remember their loved one. Talking about the person who died can be comforting. Even if it brings tears.

**Settle in and relax.** Grieving people feel drained. Sitting together quietly may be just as helpful as an active conversation.

**Be present over time.** Showing up for your friend will be noticed, whether it's at a funeral ceremony, or years later.



" Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

— Leo Buscaglia, professor and author

# Avoid saying:

**"I know how you feel."**

Each person's experience is unique.

**"You shouldn't feel that way."**

People need to process each feeling as it comes.

**"Try not to think about it."**

Grief isn't a problem to be solved. It's a process.

**"It will be OK."**

Looking ahead can minimize their current pain.

**"They're in a better place now."**

That shifts focus away from how they feel.

# Try saying:

**"I'm sad to hear your dad died."**

This opens up the conversation. It's honest and direct.

**"If you want to talk, I'm here to listen."**

This offers a safe space to talk when they're ready.

**"I'm here to help however you need."**

This lets them ask for help on their terms.

**"Let's just sit together."**

Grief is a lifelong process. So there's no rush to talk.

**"I'm not sure what to say, but I'm here for you as a friend."**

Sometimes it helps to describe exactly how you're feeling.

## Helping grieving children and families heal over a lifetime

Our mission is to create a world of compassionate communities where all people can find hope and healing after the death of a loved one. We provide grief support for families and individuals of all ages through peer groups, education, and advocacy.

### Where to find us

[highmarkcaringplace.com](https://highmarkcaringplace.com)

888-567-1028

[contactus@highmark.com](mailto:contactus@highmark.com)



#### Pittsburgh Region

620 Stanwix Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

#### Harrisburg Region

1800 Center Street  
Camp Hill, PA 17011

#### Erie Region

510 Cranberry Street  
Bldg. 2  
Erie, PA 16507

#### Cranberry Township/ Wexford Region

200 Warrendale  
Village Drive  
Warrendale, PA 15086