

## Helping to survive a loss

Death is never easy to deal with, but it is a part of life. The loss of a loved one is one of life's most stressful events. Because of the pain associated with someone dying, it is important that you know how to confront and acknowledge the intense emotions of those times.

### **Shock, anger common**

All people go through a process of grief when someone close dies. Grief is a natural, healthy response to a significant loss in our lives. Although the grief process is never the same in everyone, certain feelings are common. These feelings include shock, denial, anger, guilt, depression, loneliness, and hopefully, acceptance. Usually people can get through the grieving process alone, but sometimes there is a need for professional help to understand the "facts of death."

The period of bereavement is not easy for anybody. Family members need to be consoled and helped through the traumatic ordeal.

### **How to help**

Here are some things you can do to help the grieving process go more smoothly for those closest to the deceased.

- **Listen.** Allow the grieving person to talk openly about the person who has died the death, etc. if that is what he or she wants to do. It's just as important to respect a person's need for quiet reflection. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. While some people are very talkative, others are quiet and introspective. Remember, it's more important for you to be a help than a hindrance during this time.
- **Be present.** Your mere presence can sometimes be of more comfort than you realize. Giving a hug or holding hands can be a tremendous source of support. If you can't be with the grieving person, call, write or send flowers or a sympathy card. These and similar gestures will be appreciated.

- **Be patient.** The grieving process takes time. Each phase must be addressed. Don't try to rush the person through it or try to protect him or her from this loss. As hard as it may be to watch, the pain and the waiting are necessary to recover from loss.
- **Offer sincere support.** Be certain you are of comfort to the grieving person. Supportive remarks would include: "It takes time," "I know you'll miss your loved one and your life together; I will too," and, "She was such a good person." Avoid comments such as, "It was his time to go," or, "You'll get over it with time," as these probably won't comfort the grieving person.
- **Be useful.** You can take some of the pressure off of the grieving person by taking care of household chores, assisting with thank-you notes, helping with meals and answering the telephone. Someone who is experiencing the death of a loved one may not feel like attending to these tedious activities.

### **For more help**

If you feel your loved one may need additional advice, a counselor can listen and help with setting new goals and adjusting to the loss. To make an appointment, call Genesee Health System Crisis Services at (810) 257-3742 or toll free at (877) 346-3648, where a counselor is available 24 hours a day. To learn more about programs and services, visit [www.genhs.org](http://www.genhs.org) ©