

Becky's Corner: Grief – Meeting people where they are

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Grief is an incredible reaction that affects us all differently. We all have our histories, our cultures, our nationalities and all of the things that make us unique and because of that, we all may react to grief a bit differently. Not unexpected and not a problem.

We often may hear the phrase, “Meeting people where they are.” What does that really mean?

Simply put, it means to accept them as they are. Know that when it comes to grief, they are processing. They may be processing their grief at a different rate or speed and are doing the personal work they need to do.

Grief isn't nice and neat. We are probably all familiar with the stages of grief. We can begin with shock and denial, move to pain, transition to anger and bargaining, move to depression, have an upward turn in our emotions, begin to reconstruct and finally arrive at hope and acceptance.

What often happens is we don't move in a linear grief fashion. We can be in the shock and denial stage, move right to depression, experience pain and literally move back and forth. We can revisit the stages many times and over several years.

What we must remember is that grief is the tangible evidence that we cared for someone.

Meeting people where they are in their grief journey is an incredible gift to them.

How can we help?

What does it mean to “meet someone where they are” in their grief journey?

1. Let go of expectations.
2. Allow them to be who they are and where they are, and to feel what they feel.
3. If the grieving person seems lost, be lost with them - only they can truly find their path.
4. Don't make the grieving person come to you.
5. Don't expect them to want to raise their spirits or rush through their grief.

6. Don't minimize their thoughts or feelings.
7. Don't minimize how they feel about the magnitude of the loss.
8. Know that what a person thinks and feels in grief isn't always rational - and that's okay.
9. Allow the person's grief to exist without trying to change it.
10. Just listen. Be present with them.
11. *Really, actually* listen.
12. Don't feel the need to come up with something comforting, helpful, or inspiring to say.
13. Don't search for silver linings.
14. Be comfortable with silence when there isn't anything to say.
15. Try not to compare the person's grief or loss experience to yours or anyone else's.
16. Try not to imagine how you would think, feel, or act if you were them. In reality, you have no idea how you would think, feel, or act - even if you've experienced loss yourself.
17. Follow the grieving person's cues.
18. Allow the person's grief to exist without trying to change it.
19. Don't try and fix things.
20. Don't feel the need to offer solutions.
21. Don't try and force the person into new feelings or perspectives.
22. Just show up and be present.
23. Be willing to allow the pain to exist.
24. Be willing to sit with the pain.
25. Put your own awkwardness or discomfort aside.
26. Recognize if your *own discomfort* with a person's thought, emotion, or experience is guiding the support you're providing.
27. Don't judge or shame - whatever it may be.
28. Be there for someone the way they need you to be, even if it's not the way you want to be.
29. Validate that it's okay to feel the way the person is feeling.
30. Respect the person's space.
31. Check-in often - especially on difficult days.
32. Understand the person may experience grief flare-ups months and years later.



Thank you, Karrie Kuroda, for your invaluable insights into this challenging experience we call grief.

Be well everyone.

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