

# Caring Thoughts

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In this month's issue, we cover the awkwardness that may exist with people dealing with a loss and how our interactions can help them to heal. Below is an article by Nancy Guthrie in which she shares some great incite.

Warmest Regards,



Corey Strauch

## Yes you should say something.

**Overcoming the Awkwardness with grieving people by Nancy Guthrie**

Recently I was talking with a friend. We were trying to figure out if and how to reach out to someone she hasn't spoken to in years who lost her 35-year-old son. It's been a while since he died, and much longer since she's interacted with her friend. She was afraid of the awkwardness, of saying the wrong thing, of making her friend feel sad since maybe she wasn't so sad at this point.

I explained to her that when someone you love has died, it's as if a hurdle has been placed between you and every person you know, and that hurdle stays in place until your loss has been acknowledged in some way. It doesn't have to be a grand gesture or a long conversation. It doesn't matter if it's been a while since the loved one died. It doesn't have to be anything brilliant. Sometimes a simple "I know what has happened, and I'm so sorry," or even a nonverbal hand on the shoulder or squeeze of the hand, will knock down that barrier.

A few months after our daughter died, I was in the carpool line waiting to pick up my son from school when another mom, who had a daughter born a short time before Hope, came up to my car. She told me that she felt awkward each time she saw me since she still had her daughter while mine was gone, and that she didn't how to get past that awkwardness. "You just did," I told her. Simply acknowledging the barrier knocked it down.

Sometimes we hesitate to approach someone because we fear it's been too long since their loved one died, and that they've moved on and don't want to talk about it anymore. But the opposite is more likely to be true. If it's been a while, it's likely people have stopped talking about the one who died, while the grieving person's desire to talk about him or her has only increased.

So bring it up. And keep bringing it up over the months and even years to come. That's a gift a true friend gives someone who's grieving. It matters less what you say than that you say something.

### What Grieving People Don't Expect

It's not up to you to say something that answers the significant questions they're asking. Those take some time to work through, and if they sense

your willingness to linger with them a bit in the midst of the questions rather than offer simplistic answers, they're more likely to want to explore them with you down the road. It's not up to you to recommend the book they need to read, the counselor they need to see, the drug they need to take. You don't have to provide a framework for thinking and feeling their way through their loss. Really, you just have to show up and say little. What they need more than someone with a lot of words is someone with a willingness to listen without judgment, someone who seems to be entering into their hurting world for the long haul of grief. (continued on the back page.)

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It's not up to you to make the pain go away, even though you would love to be able to do so. Grieving people aren't expecting you to say something that will take away the hurt. They're really just hoping you will be willing to hurt with them. The reality is that even if you come up with the perfect thing to say (as if there is such a thing), it simply won't fix the hurt or solve the problem. Does that take some pressure off? I hope so.

There's nothing you can say that will make their loss hurt less. It's going to hurt for a while. They're not looking to you to make sense of it or to say something they haven't thought of or something that makes it not hurt. Your purpose in saying something is to enter into the hurt with them and let them know they're not alone.

What makes a great friend in the midst of grief is someone willing to overcome the awkwardness to engage. He or she comes alongside and is willing, at least for a while, to agree that this is terrible, unexplainable, the worst. No forced looking on the bright side. At least not yet. No suggesting you should be grateful for anything. At least not yet. To have a friend who, with a shake of the head and a sense of "How can this be?" refuses to rush too quickly past sharing a sense of agonized disappointment at the reality of death—what a gift.

### What Grieving People Most Want

Recently I conducted an online survey of people going through the loss of a loved one, asking what others have said or done in the midst of their loss that has been helpful for meaningful and what they wish others grasped about their grief. I've included many of their responses in my new book, *What Grieving People Wish You Knew About What Really Helps (and What Really Hurts)*.

In the responses I received, I noted two things in particular grieving people really want others to say to them.

#### 1. Grieving people long to hear the *name* of the person who died.

Oh, to hear that person's name. It's like salve to an aching soul, music to a heart that's lost its song. So many people get uncomfortable with speaking of the deceased by name, afraid it will take the conversation in an awkward direction. But when a person keeps speaking of someone you've loved with joyful remembrance, it does something nothing else can do. It doesn't have to be a big deal or an emotional conversation. The more natural, the better. You can say things like:

- "I thought of Bob the other day when we were getting barbeque. I always loved how he made such good barbeque. I wish he had taught me his secrets."
- "Every time I pass a biker on the road, I think of Cheryl and how she always amazed me with her stories of the rides she went on. It makes me miss her."
- "I was thinking about Barb the other day and wondering what life is like for her now in heaven. I bet she is enjoying the beauty there. She always had such an eye for beauty."
- "Remember those big curls David had? I was always kinda jealous of his hair."
- "I wish Todd were here at the game with us. What do you think he'd have to say about those refs?"
- "When all the children got up to sing in church this morning, I couldn't help but notice that someone was missing. It hurt that Allison isn't here."

#### 2. Grieving people long to hear *stories* about the person who died and *specific things* they said or did that were meaningful and memorable.

They're looking for something specific rather than general. They want something beyond "She was a special person." They want to hear or read about a specific experience you had with the person who died that made her special. Instead of hearing that he was "always there for you," they want to hear about a specific time and way he helped you.

If you can write down your memories of the person who died so that the grieving person can read them now and save them for later, your thoughtfulness becomes a gift that keeps on giving. And if the grieving person is active on social media, posting your memory online and inviting others to share similar stories is a great way to get friends in on this joyful remembering.

When you overcome the awkwardness to engage, refusing to presume you can fix anything with your words, recalling memories of and saying the name of the person who died, it's likely the grieving person may cry. But don't think for a moment you made them cry. You don't have to apologize. You simply brought to the surface what was there anyway and needed to be released.

You were brave and caring enough to talk about what others may have avoided. You've been a really good friend to someone who is grieving.

### Questions about Cremation?



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### About Corey



As a fifth generation funeral services provider, Corey Strauch has developed a passion for helping people experience the calm and dignity of knowing that their future is decided and that it will happen exactly as they desire. Over the years of working with generations of clients, Corey has made it his life's work to help people to be informed, to be prepared, and to feel secure with end of life cremation decisions. He is a licensed funeral director in Pennsylvania and has garnered 21 years of experience in the funeral and cremation industry.

Allow him to assist you in reviewing your options and to set a sturdy and secure plan for your cremation decisions. To learn more about Corey and his business, call **844-906-0263** or visit his website at [www.PennsylvaniaCremationServices.com](http://www.PennsylvaniaCremationServices.com) to find out what your options are and to request a free consultation (valued at \$195) in order to learn how you can gain the confidence of knowing that your affordable plans for cremation are securely set.



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