

Everyone Needs a Grief Friend: 5 Qualities to Consider

Adapted from: <http://www.intentionalgrief.com/everyone-needs-a-grief-friend-5-qualities-to-consider/>

“Why would I tell you deep things when I don’t know you?”

As a counselor and narrative therapist, I engage people who don’t know me all the time. And I want them to tell me their deepest worries and struggles.

After hearing a person’s story, I will often ask if they have a good friend.

“You don’t need to keep paying me to listen,” I tell them. “You don’t need to come every week in order to share your feelings. That will just cost you more money. Find a friend who knows you and ask them to do the following...” I suggest to them. And here are the things I encourage them to look for in a listening friend.

A grief friend...

Shows Up

One of the most important parts of a grief journey is someone to be consistently available every week for you at a specific time and place. When you know that you can count on a person to be available without excuse, there is something inside you that says, “One person really cares about what I am going through and is willing to be there for me each week. That’s huge!”

It’s not helpful to say, “I will give you call sometime and we can get together.” Being specific and consistent is important: “Let’s get together every Friday at 4pm.”

Listens Without Giving Advice

A good friend listens without jumping in and trying solving the problem. Because grief is an ongoing process, a back and forth, a rubber band being stretched in both directions, there is much space and time required.

A grief friend does not start with their own story. It’s not about you. This is about your friend.

Holds Confidences

When you share your journey, it’s a deep and sacred place that needs to be honored and protected. You are asking your friend to be part of something very deep. If your friend yields to

temptation by sharing any part of this journey with others, even once, it can be devastating to the grief friend relationship.

A grief friend needs to promise that he or she will always keep the conversation confidential and should remind you of this promise each time you meet.

Asks Permission

There will be times when a grief friend will hear something in the conversation that troubles them – you are reacting to loss because you miss someone very special in your life. It's not easy. Nevertheless, a grief friend points out in a gentle way that which might be harmful to you and needs further attention.

A grief friend should ask permission to point out things that trouble them. This is a big part of caring and having important, courageous conversations.

Celebrates With You and Cheers You on

A grief friend needs to be on your team and be a cheerleader for you – as you move forward from grief into mourning and attempt to find joy despite your missing. Life will never be the same. It's a different life. You are just figuring out what this might look like for you.

A grief friend takes time to find the good in a grieving friend's journey and celebrate with him or her intentionally when you notice positive transitions.

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