

To My Friend

I have lost the one I love, the one I cherish. My lover, my best friend, my whole life. Either you have stumbled across this because you want to find out how to help me, or I have given this to you.

How I am Feeling

- I am numb. I am in shock. I am emotionally exhausted.
- I am in pain. A horrible, gut-wrenching, intense, unimaginable, and indescribable pain.
- My mind is totally occupied with processing my loss. I am trying to understand what has happened. I am attempting to make sense of it all. I am trying to comprehend the incomprehensible.
- I can't sleep. I want to sleep all day. I am physically exhausted.
- I can't eat. I can't stop eating.
- I can't be bothered cooking. I can't be bothered cleaning. I don't want to go shopping.
- Everything is overwhelming. Small tasks are overwhelming. Small details are overwhelming. I just don't want to know about it right now.
- Nothing sticks in my mind. I walk out the door without my keys. I forget what I was going to do. I forget everything except that my love has gone.
- I am going through tidal waves of emotion. One minute I might be laughing, the next I may be in tears.
- Sometimes I want to talk. Sometimes I need to be alone. Sometimes I need silent company. Sometimes I need all of these things in the space of 5 minutes.
- Some days I just want to curl up in bed and do nothing. Some days I will keep myself totally occupied in an attempt to escape.
- Sometimes I will be intense. Sometimes I will be irrational. Sometimes I will be snappy, and often I will be totally lost in myself.
- Often I may not have a clue as to what I want, but it only takes a moment for me to realize what I don't want.
- I am hypersensitive and will often be offended by things you say to try and make me feel better.
- I want to wail. I want to scream. I want to cry. I want to just sit.
- I have no choice how I react. This is coming from deep inside me and intelligence and self control have no effect. It comes from the basal self.
- Sometimes it so hard for me to respond to phone calls or letters or emails, but I truly appreciate that you are doing it, so please don't stop just because I don't respond.
- I will not be fully-functional at work for a long time. In fact, I may never work with the same intensity again as my perspectives of what is important and what isn't has been changed permanently.
- I still want to laugh. I need to laugh. I may suddenly go quiet mid-laugh, when hit by a sudden reminder, but I desperately need to continue to laugh.

Emotional Things You Can Do

- Let me talk about him. I want to talk about our love. I want to tell you how we met, our last days, and everything in between. I want to show you his picture, tell you how wonderful he was.
- Let me cry. Your acceptance that I need to cry and your permission to allow me to is one of the best gifts you can give me. Hand me a tissue, and do your best to sit quietly and let me cry.

- Once you have allowed me to open up or cry, please don't change the subject or try to stop me. I know you feel uncomfortable that I am in pain. Don't. Changing the subject, trying to stop me crying just makes me hold everything inside, and eats away at me.
- Tell me all your stories of when my love was sweet, courageous, rotten or funny. I need to hear everything about him. If you don't know many, find out some from those who are too scared to approach me now.
- Let me try to tell you what is going on inside me. I won't succeed, but I need to try. You don't have to do anything. Just allowing me to do it, and allowing me to feel what I need to feel means so much.
- It is really hard for me to tell other people about my loss. I'm working full time to deal with my emotions. Trying to deal with someone else's reaction or discomfort is the last thing I need, so if someone needs to know it would be good if you could explain it to them.

What Not To Do

- Don't tell me you understand how I feel, or that you can imagine the pain I am going through, unless you have lost the love of your life. Trust me, you can't. If I can't, and I am going through it, trust me, you can't – your mind will just not let you voluntarily imagine this much pain.
- Don't try to compare my loss to the loss of a parent, or a friend, or an acquaintance or pet, it's not the same. I understand that all of these things are painful, but it is not the same.
- Don't ask how I'm doing unless you really want to know. I am assuming that as you know, and as you have asked, you truly want to know.
- Don't try to save me from my feelings or make me feel better. I know you can't bear to see me in so much pain, but I need to go through all of these feelings whether I want to or not.
- Once you have "given me permission" to talk or cry, please don't try and distract me with small talk. I know it makes you feel better if I appear happy, but my pain is ever-present and it makes me feel like you don't care.
- Don't tell me everything will be okay.
- Don't tell me "he's always with you".
- Don't tell me "he's no longer in pain".
- Don't tell me "he's looking down on you from heaven".
- Don't tell me "you're lucky that you had such love, some people don't".
- Don't tell me "he's in a better place".
- Don't however be surprised however if I say these things...
- Don't ever tell me "you must be strong". If ever there's a time I should be permitted to be weak, this is it. What's more, if I only "need to talk" to you once every few weeks, chances are I have been strong and right now I really need you to understand that I am exhausted and need help.
- Whatever you do don't tell me "If I were you I'd..." Until you are in the same situation, you have absolutely no idea what you will do. Your logical brain has absolutely no control.
- Never try telling me "life goes on", or "he wouldn't want you to cry", or "God will never give you more than you can handle" or any other meaningless platitudes.
- Don't try to solve my "problem". Unless you can bring him back, it can't be "solved".
- Don't feel the need to fill in silences. I know the silences are hard for you, but if you can accept them, you are helping me immensely.
- Please don't try and help me find "closure", or tell me I need to find "closure". Closure is an obscene word for me right now, as is "moving on"/"move on".

Practical Things You Can Do

I understand that a lot of you find it hard to cope with my emotional pain. Hate to see me hurting so. If you can't help me emotionally, you can help me practically.

- Don't ask me what you can do to help. I have no idea, I am overwhelmed.
- Bring me some meals that I can just put in the microwave.
- Find out what sort of bread, milk, toilet paper, etc I use and bring me them to me. I have no idea I need them until I run out, so don't bother asking me if I need anything.
- If you are an organized person offer to manage my bills. Collect the bills as they come in and let me know when they need to be paid, and make sure I do. Time has no meaning for me right now. It's only when the cut-off notices come that I realize I need to do something.
- Get copies of photos I don't have from family and friends and put them in an album for me. It will be one of the most precious gifts you could give me.

Remember

Grief is an emotional injury that requires time to heal. Not a week, not a month, not even a year, it takes as long as it takes. It is similar to major physical injury. You may not be able to see the wounds on the inside, but they are there.

Real-life is nothing like TV.

I will not "get over it" - I will learn to live with my loss and incorporate the lessons into my life.

I will get better over time, but I will never forget him. The pain ebbs and flows, but never goes completely.