

# How To Help Someone Who Has Lost a Loved One

by Larrisa Thomis

It was spring time in the high mountains of Arizona, May 29, 2005, a Sunday, and my life froze in time and space, never to thaw or be the same. What to say? What to do?

Thank you for not asking, "What can I do?" For you see my friend, my loved one suddenly passed that day as we ate lunch at a new restaurant. My life as I knew it went on hold and was never the same.

So you'll understand now that I know you are grieving too, and would like to do something. You'll have to make that choice on

your own until, perhaps, one day I know what to do.

Think of what you can do for your grieving friend. Simple things often are the hardest to do, yet bring kindness to the grieving heart. One friend called and said he'd come over and take my car and fill it up, remembering that my husband always did it as the gas fumes bothered me. Then came the day he showed me how to fill up the tank myself, with patience and laughter, while getting through a simple process that had terrified me in the past.

Give your friend space and hugs (if they are open to them), for all is gone that once was, and piece-by-piece a new life will begin. The stages are so personal; what works for one may not for another.

Listen with an open heart to the one who has lost their love, for what they say and what they are not saying before you ask questions. For whatever reason, those who are grieving the most are asked so many questions day in and out that all they want to do is shout "Stop! Leave me alone." Often inside my mind I'd hear, "Why are they asking me these ques-

tions? What will they do with the answers? Is it really any of their business?" Needless to say, the answers, if I knew them, would only come in bits and pieces as my mind scrambled to pull something together that might make sense.

Changes always happen. That is life as much as death of the body. Perhaps in sharing some of my experiences one might take a deeper breath and exhale before asking questions that are often personal and better left unasked.

What's alive in the person left behind? What will assist them in gathering together their life — or what is left of it — so they may start to function without their loved one?

Kindness comes to mind. The kindness of being with them in silence, a walk or a cup of tea. Remember, it's your friend who has lost their partner. Their mind no longer functions as it did. The inquiring mind can be so helpful when redirected in a simple kind way. A squeeze

of a hand or a smile eases the grieving heart.

We are all new at this grieving, for only once in this life does one come in. And then the body goes as the time has come for the spirit to move on, leaving the body and the body of friends and loved ones behind.

Come dance with me among the flowers and trees and rejoice in who we are and were. For in the passing we all gather with are worries and woes while the one who passes celebrates the joy of going home.

Oh, dear one, you came and told me you were safe and indeed I would be okay as I carried on without you physically by my side. The loving touch you came back to share with me helped to carry me on and through the debris that was left once you were gone. The strength to carry on was one gift you gave me as you touched me with the divine love you truly are.

Knowing all is fine in your world and will be one day in mine, I carry on. You see, many couldn't understand why I looked radiant after my husband died. An angel came that day and gave us space to communicate the love we have to share and that all-encompassing love that radiates within each and every person, if given the space.

"Tell me what to do!" friends would say to me. "My god, they are asking me, who can't remember where my mind is, like a shattered jigsaw puzzle that has pieces never to be found. How to gather the fractured thoughts that ramble through the space between my ears that have yet to make a sound." Sometimes I say, "What do you want to do?"

Step-by-step, breath-by-breath, somehow the days turn into nights and back to days again and again till now several years have gone by. There are times that the shattered space between the heart and the mind find no rest since the other part of me suddenly left.

One of the hardest scenarios was how so-called friends and family changed, or was it that their true selves came out? Some were more loving, while others took advantage in what seemed cruel ways. Death brings out hidden emotions that one has no ideas about until faced with it personally. Kindness of family, friends and new friends, and my animals have given me the encouragement to keep turning the new pages of this life.

Life moves on. Being kind to myself became the number one priority and remembering that I could do only that which I could do. To laugh and cry at the same time until it's my turn to go home.

*Larrisa Thomis lives in Arizona with her cat Mr. Q, rediscovering her world while releasing the past and living in the now through art, writing, photography, and being.*

Listen with an open heart to the one who has lost their love, for what they say and what they are not saying before you ask questions. Those who are grieving the most are asked so many questions day in and out that all they want to do is shout "Stop!"

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