

What to say when others hurt

During times of great personal tragedy for those you know and love, it's difficult to know what to say or how to help. So what can you do to help friends and loved ones find their way when life deals them a devastating blow?

Marriage and family therapist Dr. Randy Carlson offers these practical ideas:

- **Be available:** During some of the most painful times in their lives, people often feel invisible. When we don't know how to respond to someone in pain, we often avoid them. Acknowledge their presence and let them know you're there for them. If they don't want to talk, they'll tell you. You might be surprised how much comfort you can bring just by sitting in silence with someone. Sometimes it's much better without words for both of you.
- **Be willing to listen:** People need time to take in what has happened. Sometimes it helps them to talk about how they feel. Usually they're not looking to you to solve the problem, give them advice or even understand what they're going through. Be careful not to offer pat answers. Just hear them out.
- **Be a safe place:** As a true friend you can provide a safe place for them to share their pain. Keep your conversations with them confidential and honor their trust in you.

