



FIVE PRACTICES: HOW TO PROVIDE GRIEF SUPPORT

*Affirm that people have **permission to grieve** in their own way, including that:*

- Grief is a natural, normal reaction to the impact death has on an intimate human bond.
- People deserve the space, time, and accommodations they need to grieve.
- It is OK for them to ask for what they need—and even to insist on it.
- It is OK for them to choose to be with people and in situations where the above is understood and supported (and to choose *not* to be where it is not supported).

*Support people's struggles with **why this death happened**, regarding which they may:*

- Feel that the death was unfair or cruel—or that life has no meaning
- Wonder if it could have or should have been prevented
- Be troubled by what role the person who died might have had in their own death
- Need to grapple with the role of addiction in the death, especially with issues such as societal stigma, family dynamics, or the effects of the epidemic

*Be present for people in the midst of the **pain and emotions of grief**, which may require:*

- Discerning when it might be best to focus on bearing witness to their pain versus helping them “step back” from their pain
- Working within grief's rhythm, noting that it repeatedly manifests, intensifies, and abates
- Reinforcing the vital, purposeful connection between grief and love
- Seeing that the strong, difficult emotions of grief also have positive value
- Offering and/or guiding people to extra help if trauma is affecting their grief

*Empathize with people seeing life as **completely changed by the death**, including that:*

- They see two worlds, one that existed with the person in it, which is now gone, and one that now exists without the person who died, which is unfamiliar and unwanted.
- Many tasks, from the most practical to the most profound, can be extraordinarily difficult—and can serve as persistent reminders of the person's absence.
- Everything they do that matters might say something to them about their identity without the person.

*Honor how bereaved people **find meaning in life**, each in their own way, as they:*

- Remember—and maintain a lifelong relationship with—the person who died
- Act on behalf of—or in sync with the values or character of—the person who died
- Apply insights or use strengths gained from experiencing grief
- Make connections between surviving tragedy and exploring what is most important to them
- Discover “who they are” independent of their relationship with the person who died