

STARTING TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

UNEXPECTED DEATH OF MARINE'S FAMILY MEMBER

Dealing with the death of a loved one is a profoundly painful experience. It can be so painful, those who are close to someone who is grieving are often at a loss for words. Offering support during this time is important, though. There are ways to tell your grieving friend or relative that you care.

SIMPLE AND STRAIGHTFORWARD

Verbally acknowledging that your friend may feel many different things including sadness and anger. They might not be used to the intense emotions and just knowing that you are there to support them can be helpful. This can help the Marine acknowledge their feelings, which is healthy. "You're in my thoughts and prayers" acknowledges your care and concern for the person who is grieving. If the mention of prayer would offend, just tell him you're thinking of him. There's nothing wrong with admitting your loss for words, especially if the death was sudden. "I don't know what to say" is better than saying nothing.

SIMPLE ALTERNATIVES

Verbally acknowledging that your friend may feel many different things including sadness and anger. They might not be used to the intense emotions and just knowing that you are there to support can be helpful. This can help the Marine acknowledge their own feelings, which is healthy. "You're in my thoughts and prayers" acknowledges your care and concern for the person who is grieving. If the mention of prayers would offend, just tell him you're thinking of him. There's nothing wrong with admitting your loss for words, especially if the death was sudden. "I don't know what to say" is better than saying nothing.

INVOKING MEMORIES

Explore ways your friend can celebrate the positive things about their loved one. Don't worry that discussing the positive things will bring up more pain. It opens up a good discussion that will help your friend not to minimize the impact their loved one had on their life. "He was a wonderful husband" or "she was a loving mother" will be welcomed by a grieving spouse or adult child. This can open the door to a conversation and allow you to share a memory or two that your friend may appreciate. For example: "I'll always remember that surprise birthday party he threw for you. And you almost didn't show up!"

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY.

Discuss how eating and getting enough sleep are important, and encourage your friend to take care of him/herself. Encourage your friend to take time to care for his/her family and remind them that the other Marines in the unit will ensure that the work is getting done at the shop, but that they will be welcomed back with open arms when they are ready.

LEND AN EAR

Someone who has lost a loved one often wants to talk about him and reminisce. Let him know you're there to listen by saying, "I'm here for you" or "You can call me any time." Make sure he knows you're sincere about calling any time. People who are grieving sometimes feel that they're intruding and won't make a call unless they know your offer is genuine. Remind them that others still want to experience life with them, and isolating themselves may not be helpful.

TAKE ACTION

You don't have to wait for the person who has lost a loved to call. Follow up and ask how he's doing. Instead of offering to help, actually do it. Don't say "Let me know if I can help you with groceries." Instead, show up at the door with groceries. This demonstrates your ongoing support.

SUPPORT & RESOURCES

If you or your family have recently dealt with the unexpected loss of a loved one and would benefit from counseling, contact your installation Community Counseling Program (CCP). CCP is staffed with independently licensed counselors who can help you deal with your grief and feel less overwhelmed by what is going on in your life right now. Visit your local MCCS website for your CCP contact information. Your unit Chaplain can also be a great resource.

