



WHAT MAKES PEER GRIEF SUPPORT HELPFUL?

HELPFUL PERSPECTIVES:

- The person is experiencing something similar to what I have experienced—but not the same as what I experienced.
- The person is suffering—but does not have an illness that needs to be cured, and nothing is wrong with the person.
- What is happening to the person is painful—and their pain is a natural outcome of the death of someone they are close to.
- I do not know how the person feels or what the person needs—or if what they are doing is “right” or “wrong.”
- Helping means meeting the person where they “are at” and being guided by their strengths, needs, and point of view.
- I am a helper to the person, and the person is helping me.

HELPFUL ROLES:

- To maintain a safe space for the person to share their story
- To collaborate with the person as an equal
- To allow the person to choose
- To support the person in coping with pain and emotions
- To model hopefulness and healing
- To help the person help themselves
- To affirm the person’s connectedness with others
- To effectively share my personal experience

HELPFUL APPROACHES:

- Listening intently, speaking supportively, asking open-ended questions
- Being kind, patient, empathetic, compassionate
- Practicing open-mindedness, respect, tolerance
- Treating people with dignity, fairness, acceptance
- Addressing all manner of difficulties—and especially crises—forthrightly, judiciously, confidentially, and safely

The evidence is clear that there has been quite a range of ... forms of suffering ... that have led to a person’s being a wounded healer ... Whatever the form of the personal suffering, there has been a transmutation of that experience into a sensitivity to the suffering of others, and that sensitivity has enhanced the capacity to be useful to others in a healing role.

—Stanley Jackson—