

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

It's hard for people to see us in pain after loss, and it's a natural tendency for them to try to fix what appears broken. Although it's human nature to communicate using words, well intentioned statements can backfire in the emotional volatility of the moment.

Below are some of the comments that mourners can find inflammatory, and why (excerpted from *Grief Diaries: How to Help the Newly Bereaved*, 2016).

“How are you? Are you okay?” This statement ignores the obvious and demands an answer.

“I understand how you feel.” This statement tends to dismiss our intense emotions, and is especially inflammatory if the person saying it hasn't shared the same loss.

“Time heals all wounds.” Time doesn't heal the pain. Instead, over the years the rawness softens and our coping skills become stronger.

“It will get better every day.” Grief isn't a chronological process. One day can be good, but the next two might be very hard.

“Call if you need anything.” The brain's stress hormones cloud logical thinking, and some of us fear being a burden.

“You need to stay strong.” This often evokes guilt for crying.

“You're so strong!” This often evokes confusion over why the mourner feels so weak.

“At least s/he isn't suffering.” One's own suffering snuffs out all logic as to why we should be glad our loved one can't feel pain.

“God must have needed him/her.” No matter how steadfast one is in his or her beliefs, a profound loss often triggers an examination of why our faith didn't protect our loved one.

“It's time to move on.” The person making this statement implies that s/he knows what's best. Rushing through grief can hinder our progress.

“We all lose someone at some point,” or “Loss is a part of life.” While both are true, they lack compassion and dismiss one's right to move through the bereavement process.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION

What statement(s) do you find most inflammatory? How do they make you feel?
