

# Identifying How Others Can Support You

Often during grief, we know that we need support but we don't always know *exactly* what we want from others who may be trying to help. A common phrase offered is "Let me know if there's anything that I can do!" But that's no good to you, as you probably don't know what they can do for you except to bring your loved one back or take away your pain.

So let's look at how you can start to understand *what* would be most helpful to you.

Do consider that not all your needs may be directly related to your grief as your whole life may feel as if it's fallen apart and everything may be out of sync for some time. And our friends and families are all unique too and have varying qualities and strengths so some are better than others at offering different forms of help. For example, you might recognise who is more patient/a good listener and would be the best person with whom you could openly talk about your feelings, whilst noting that someone else feels useful doing a practical task for you and another person might be someone with whom you've shared a previous hobby/interest together who could encourage you to enjoy an activity to help you to reconnect to yourself.

The purpose of this exercise is to bring about more awareness of your greatest pain points which can be *anything* you are finding difficult or struggling with (some of this may come up again in the exercise 'This Helps Me/This Hinders Me').



Start to think about situations or times in your day that are most difficult for you, whether it be something mentally draining, physically exhausting or an occasion that brings up challenging and painful emotions. Keep a notebook with you, use notes on your phone to write down what they are, or print off the attached chart to write ideas down as they occur to you. It may be helpful to think about your needs in three categories:

- 1. Practical support:** Could include cooking, shopping, taking the kids to school/after-school activities, cleaning your home. If you can identify a specific need, it makes it much easier to ask for that help. And remember, others do like having tasks to do that make them feel they are supporting you!
- 2. Emotional needs:** Recognising that you want to be able to talk/share memories of your loved one with someone/a group who do not judge you, hurry you, and give you the space to be yourself and cry openly, or someone who wants to support you to remember and honour your loved one through planning a memorial service/accompanying you to revisit their grave, etc
- 3. Wellbeing needs:** Might involve going out for lunch with a friend, a social event after work, a phonecall to check in on you, someone who encourages you to join them for a run/exercise class. Grief can make it very hard for us to feel motivated and sometimes we need others to push us a little, to do something that we've enjoyed before that could boost our mood, even if only temporarily. Even within grief, you need some respite.

The more you are able to increase awareness of your needs, the better equipped you are to tell others how they can support you which, in turn, should help to lighten your load just a little. We know that grief can be a long journey to recovery, you don't need to be a martyr and do everything alone and it's not a sign of weakness to ask for help. If you keep saying no to others, they will eventually stop asking. If people are genuinely offering you support and you need it, this is the time to take it.

