*If you wish to offer help to a friend or relative, look at the following list, think about what you could do, and offer a specific service to the person or the family. Whatever you can do, volunteer assistance without waiting to be asked; and if a person close to the deceased assigns you a task, do it without complaint or squeamishness. These are extraordinary times, and even a small act of kindness or practicality might mean the world to the recipient.*

* Simply be there. Let the person know you are there for whatever they need. Just your quiet presence may be one of the most supportive things you can do. Your presence can be very supportive whether the person needs to talk, or feels intimidated by the necessary conversations with professionals connected with the case.
* Tell the person you are available to talk about what happened at any time—and really be there. Offer your shoulder to cry on, open your heart to the pain. This is perhaps the greatest gift—to listen, to encourage the person to talk rather than to hold the story inside.
* A vague, general offer of assistance, such as “What can I do?” may be too difficult for the person to respond to, if they are feeling overwhelmed by so many things needing to be done. Be as specific as possible, for example: “Do you need groceries?” or “Do you need a ride to . . .?” or “You haven’t sat down for hours; please, let me do that for you, and you just rest. Here’s a cup of tea; now, sit!”
* Don’t wait for the person to call. Be proactive; grieving people feel isolated and lonely, particularly after the first wave of trauma has passed. Often, they will not reach out—do call and check up on them.

*What is not helpfull:*

* Saying, “It’s God’s will.” People may conclude this eventually because of their own faith, but it is not a scenario to impose upon them while they are still reeling from the shock of a death
* Being overly sentimental; for example, declaring the loved one is in heaven, happy, and so on
* Telling the bereaved parent, they will have more children
* Telling the person you know what they are going through (you don’t, unless you too have experienced the ***exact*** same thing)
* Asking for details, unless the person is clearly willing to tell you the story

*What might be helpful:*

* Share a wonderful memory that you have of that person, or express how much he or she cared for the one who is grieving
* Offer photographs or other special mementos of the person to the family, who may not have something current of that nature
* *Immediately* send a brief note of condolence to the closest family member of the deceased, written in your own words, rather than just signing an impersonal store-bought card. This is especially important if you are not able to be there in person. It may seem like a trivial act, but is, in fact, incredibly impactful; people even in the deepest shock or despair usually recall for many years and with absolute precision, who spoke out to comfort them and who did not.

The best thing is to not run away—try to stay with the grieving person through even aspects that make you sick or afraid, though seeing sides of the bereaved that perhaps you have never known before. You will not be able to fix or change every circumstance affecting the person; just be there to help in whatever way you *can* be of assistance.

*A Grief Like No Other*, O’Hara, K. (2006)