

What is first aid for grief?

No one needs to be alone in their grief. That is why the Church of Sweden has collected thoughts and specific tips that make it a little easier for us as fellow human beings to be there for someone who is in mourning. Grief has no cure, but sharing can make the burden of grief more bearable. These tips are based on the many years of experience the Church of Sweden has in meeting and supporting those in mourning. Think of it as a type of first aid for that first period of mourning when someone suffers a loss. All grief is unique, and there are no absolute truths or instructions that can be applied. Perhaps that is also why so many people feel uncertain when coming face to face with another person's grief. With these tips, the Church of Sweden hopes to help more people feel a little more certain and better prepared, so that no one is left alone with their grief.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."
(Jes 41:10)

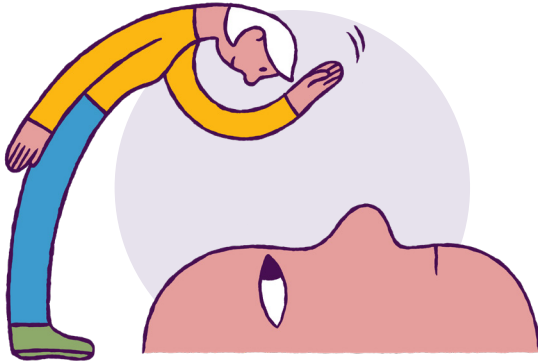
The tips you will find in this leaflet are just some of the many things we can do for those who are in mourning. Don't underestimate the little things – even the smallest gesture can have a huge meaning. If you want more support or someone to talk to, you are welcome to visit your parish.

You can find contact details and more specific tips at svenskakyrkan.se/forstahjelpenvidsorg



First Aid for Grief

Specific tips on how to make it easier to be there for someone who is in mourning.



Make contact

The most important thing may be that we don't burden the person who is grieving with the responsibility of making contact. We can avoid saying, "Call me if there is anything I can do, I'm here for you" as there is a big risk that the person who is grieving won't manage to take the initiative and make contact. It's better to say "I'll call you again on Tuesday, answer if you are up to it." Sometimes, we will not get an answer and that is totally OK, the person who is grieving may not always be up to answering, but we can always call back – again and again.



Take the initiative

It can be good if the person providing support is the one who suggests doing a completely normal, everyday activity. Something simple like inviting the person for a coffee, or to go to a film or for a walk. Many who are in mourning long for a break from the grief and a bit of ordinary life. Bear in mind that the person we invite may say no, and that's OK – the important thing is that we ask – and that we dare to ask again.



Break the silence

For many of us, it can feel difficult to reach out to a fellow human being who is grieving. What should I say? What if there is only silence, or the person starts crying? The important thing is not what we say, only that we break the silence. And sometimes an SMS is a better option than a telephone call, as it can be easier to send and reply.



Be present

Many of us are afraid of being pushy, and this often ends with us not making contact at all. Perhaps we think that the person in mourning needs to be left alone or to wait a while until "the worst has passed", before being contacted. It is important that we clearly show that we are there so that the person who is grieving doesn't feel isolated, left out or ignored.



Give space

Often there are many people mourning a loss at the same time, where everyone has had their own relationship and history with the person who has passed on. It is important that we allow those closest to the deceased to be the focus and avoid taking over with our own memories and emotions. We must remember to allow the emotions of those in grief to be the ones that matter, whatever those emotions may be. Of course, our thoughts and memories are also important – but not the most important.



Be patient

Every person has their own grieving process, which is something we must understand and be patient with. We may run the risk of trying to console the grief away, or show frustration that it is still hanging on. Grief has no expiration date, and there are no normal or abnormal times for how long the grieving process lasts. Some things simply need to be said again and again, so it's OK to let your fellow human dwell on what has happened – it can be an important part of understanding and processing the grief.