HELPING TO SURVIVE A LOSS

Death is never easy to deal with but it is a part of life. The loss of a loved one is one of life's most stressful events. Because of the pain associated with someone dying, it is important that you know how to acknowledge and work with the intense emotions of those times.

All people go through a process of grief when someone close dies. Grief is a natural response to significant loss. Although the grief process is never the same for everyone, certain feelings commonly occur.

These feelings can include shock, denial, anger, guilt, depression, loneliness, and hopefully, acceptance. Sometimes there is a need for professional help to understand the "facts of death".

The period of bereavement may not be an easy one. Family members and close friends can help console one another. For some it may be traumatic. Here are some things you can do to help the grieving process go smoother for those closest to the deceased.

1. **Listen.** Allow the grieving person to talk openly about the person who has died, the manner of death, etc., if that is what they want to do. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. While some people are very talkative, others are quiet and introspective. Remember, it's more important for you to help by listening than risk hindering them by trying to direct their process.

2. **Be present.** Your mere presence can sometimes be of more comfort than you realize. Giving a hug or holding hands can be a tremendous source of support. If you can't be with the grieving person, call, write or send flowers or a sympathy card. These and similar gestures will be appreciated.

3. **Be patient.** The grieving process takes time and phases may not be sequential. Don't try to rush the person through their process or try to protect them from their loss. As hard as it maybe to experience, the pain and the waiting are necessary for their recovery.

4. **Offer sincere support.** Be careful of what you say in attempting to comfort the grieving person. Supportive remarks would include "It takes time", "I know you'll miss your loved one and your life together, I will too" and "She was such a good person". Comments like "it was his time to go" or "You'll get over it with time" probably won't comfort the grieving person.

5. **Be useful.** You can take some of the pressure off of the grieving person by taking care of household chores, assisting with thank-you notes, helping with meals and answering the telephone. Someone who is experiencing the death of a loved one may not feel like attending to these tedious activities. If you would like more information on helping someone deal with their grief, or you need help in getting through your own grief process, call the Employee Assistance Program at 1-800-479-9639, or go to www.disdatyourservice.org, click on “Work/Life Balance”, then click on LifeResources@DallasISD. www.magellanassist.com Licensed mental health professionals are there to help.