

Bereavement Navigators

Providing Organizational Tools, Resources, and Mentoring

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SUGGESTED GIFTS FOR A WIDOW/WIDOWER/ADULT CHILD

when you want to help and don't know what to do

"Treasure the one who lightens the burden of anyone else" – Charles Dickens

1. Immediately after a death,
 - a. If a date and time for a funeral home visitation, the funeral, or a memorial service is published in the newspaper or online, offer to stay at the deceased's home during these times so the home will be occupied and safe.
2. During the first week or two after a death,
 - a. As an alternative to a traditional sympathy card, write a personal note where you share warm memories of the deceased.
 - b. Set up and coordinate a Meal Train account (www.mealtrain.com), where family and friends can sign up for a date and time to provide a meal.*
 - c. In the metro Atlanta, Georgia area, a group of people might like to purchase a week's worth of healthy prepared meals from an organization such as Good Measure Meals (www.goodmeasuremeals.com), or the equivalent in your geographic area.*
3. During months 2-6 (and beyond), after friends are now back into their normal routines,
 - a. Take the bereaved out for lunch or dinner. It can serve as a light social outing, especially if the bereaved is feeling lonely.
 - b. Invite the bereaved to join you for major religious and non-religious holiday celebrations.
4. Anytime after a death,
 - a. Bring a simple snack or meal to the bereaved's home and eat with them.* What is most important and welcomed is your presence and just listening, not the food. Suggestions include:
 - i. Starbucks' Protein Boxes (cheese and fruit; chicken and hummus) or Protein Bowls (<https://www.starbucks.com/menu/food/lunch>), or create your own protein box or bowl.
 - ii. A hearty soup and nice bread in the winter.

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- iii. A light salad with protein in the spring or summer.
- iv. A tuna sandwich with fruit and cookies.
- b. Buy a food gift card.* A gift card allows the bereaved to choose what they want to eat and when they want to eat, especially when they don't feel like cooking. Ideas to consider include:
 - i. Supermarkets with great prepared foods, such as Whole Foods, Fresh Market, etc.
 - ii. The bereaved's favorite restaurants. The bereaved can use the gift card when they are ready to go out socially and can invite someone to go with them.
- c. Provide one or more of the following items:
 - i. A box of manila file folders to keep the bereaved's numerous documents, papers and notes organized.
 - ii. Colored dots to label furniture and other items to be given to family members or friends.
 - iii. Plastic dry cleaner bags to cover clothes when giving them away or storing them.
 - iv. Storage boxes and brown paper bags with handles to pack things to give away or for filing papers.
 - v. Black plastic garbage bags to pack things to give away or for throwing things away.
 - vi. Shipping boxes and envelopes to ship/mail the deceased's possessions as remembrances to family and friends.
- d. Bring a pack of seeds or a small plant and plant it with the bereaved. From a German proverb: *"To bury grief, plant a seed"*.
- e. Search your photos for a favorite picture of the deceased either (1) alone, (2) with you, (3) with their loved one, or (4) with a group of relatives or friends and have it framed.
- f. Gift a book about widows/widowers. For favorite book suggestions from other widows/widowers, go to: <http://bereavementnavigators.com/resources/>.
- g. Organize a birthday party for the bereaved's first (or second, depending on the date) birthday after the death of their spouse or partner.
- h. Call the bereaved prior to the anniversary of the deceased's death and offer to (1) take them to dinner or a movie or (2) go for a walk with them.
- i. Share a favorite memory of the deceased. For most people, there is nothing more valued and appreciated than learning how the deceased touched someone's life and the impact it made.

- j. If one or both of the deceased's parents are still living or the deceased has adult children, visit them and share memories of the deceased. Many times people only focus on visiting the spouse or partner but forget that the deceased's parent(s) and adult children might welcome the same comfort and support, even one or two years later. It's never too late to go and visit. Not only will you have provided a wonderful experience for the deceased's parent(s) and adult children, but hopefully this will be a great experience for you, too!
- k. Gift certificates/gift cards
 - i. When the bereaved is ready for more social activity, a theatre or other entertainment gift certificate or gift card, either for a specific event or for whenever they choose to use it, may be a much appreciated gift.
 - ii. Soon after a death when the bereaved may be feeling overwhelmed, they may welcome a Bereavement Navigators' gift certificate for assistance and guidance to help with the numerous, unexpected, and sometimes painful tasks they may be facing. Services provided include the **organizational tools, resources, and mentoring** (outside those of their professional service advisors) that they may need after their loved one has died.

Professional service advisors and groups of friends have found purchasing a gift certificate for one or more Bereavement Navigators' consulting sessions to be a very thoughtful and loving way to express "I/we are truly sorry for your loss", because it shows you truly care about the bereaved.

5. Additional resources:

- a. Article: "Why Not to Say 'How Can I Help?'" to the Grief-Ridden (www.nextavenue.org/how-can-i-help-conundrum-in-a-time-of-grief/). The 7th paragraph provides a great narrative about how to identify what you can do to help the bereaved without ever asking 'how can I help?'.

* Be sure to ask the bereaved if they have any dietary preferences or health requirements, such as wanting or needing to maintain a vegan, gluten-free, diabetic, etc. diet.