

# What to Say When You Don't Know What to Say

## Quick Reference Card

### When Someone Is Grieving

Your presence matters more than your words. Simple, grounded language helps the nervous system feel safer.

### Helpful Things to Say

- “I’m so sorry this happened.”
- “I don’t have the right words, but I care about you.”
  - “I’m here with you.”
- “Would you like company or quiet right now?”

### Why This Helps

These phrases reduce pressure, validate loss, and help the brain exit fight-or-flight by offering safety and choice.

### Phrases to Avoid

- “Everything happens for a reason.”
  - “They’re in a better place.”
  - “At least you still have...”
  - “Be strong.”

### Why to Avoid Them

Meaning-making too early can increase distress and make the person feel unseen or silenced.

### If You Said the Wrong Thing

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to hurt you. I’m still here.”  
Repair matters more than perfection.