

Clichés to be avoided and statements that may help By Henya Shanun-Klein, Ph.D.

Clichés to be avoided and statements that may help: (adapted from: Linn, E. (1986). I Know How You Feel. Avoiding the clichés of grief, and from GRIEF NOTES in: www.gilisplace.org

Here are a few examples of clichés that can be hurtful to a grieving person. There are many more:

You are so strong.

I admire your courage.

Be strong for your ----

I would have died if this happened to me.

No sense in crying over spilled milk.

I know how you feel.

Life goes on.

Time will heal.

Count your blessings.

It was God's will.

You are still young. You can have another child/marry again.

Only the good die young.

God needs him/her more than you do.

You still have your memories.

You should focus/remember the good times.

You should think positive.

At least you had a chance to say 'good bye.'

It's your choice to be angry/depressed/sad.

You seem to be stuck in grief. It's not normal.

If there's anything I can do, just call me.

Get over it.

Something must have been wrong already.

It's better this way.

God called you to his ministry.

You are so selfish – you just want them in your life.

You didn't want to have a baby now/before Christmas anyway.

What doesn't kill you, helps you.

God didn't give you anything you cannot handle.

God has something better for you in store.

S/he would have wanted it that way.

At least you had your 10 years with her/him.

At least you didn't have time to get attached to your baby.

This (your grief) will pass.

You have your whole life ahead of you.

Let it rest.

Here are a few verbal and non-verbal statements that bereaved persons find helpful:

Silence.

'You may talk to me while I'm in pain, just don't try to talk me out of it.'

'You can go on with life, but you can't get over it.'

'Just sit with me. Listen to me, don't give me advice.'

'Acknowledge my condition.'

Say: 'I'm sorry.'

Say: 'I don't know what to say.'

Say: 'What do you want me to do for you?' (and do it).

Refer to the deceased by name.

Ask about the deceased: What kind of a person was s/he?

Ask to see photos of the deceased.