

SUPPORTING A GRIEVING SPOUSE

Compassionate guidance for family, friends, and caregivers

The death of a spouse or life partner can affect nearly every part of daily life. Along with missing the person they love, the surviving spouse may be grieving shared routines, companionship, identity, security, and the future they expected to have together. Thoughtful support recognizes the depth of this loss and remains steady long after the earliest days of grief.

RECOGNIZE THE WHOLE LOSS

A spouse may have been their closest companion, confidant, co-parent, caregiver, and partner in everyday life.

- Acknowledge how much has changed
- Mention their spouse or partner by name
- Listen to memories without changing the subject
- Avoid comparing this loss with another loss

MAKE ROOM FOR LONELINESS

Even in a room full of people, the absence of a spouse can feel profound. Quiet companionship can be deeply meaningful.

- Invite them without pressuring them to attend
- Offer a short visit, meal, walk, or phone call
- Allow silence without trying to fill it
- Continue reaching out when others have moved on

HELP WITH DAILY LIFE

Tasks once shared between two people may now feel unfamiliar, exhausting, or overwhelming. Specific offers are easiest to answer.

- Help with meals, errands, paperwork, or home care
- Offer transportation or accompany them to appointments
- Give choices instead of saying, "Let me know"
- Respect their decisions and independence

RESPECT THEIR OWN PACE

There is no timetable for grieving a spouse. Decisions about belongings, routines, and the future belong to the grieving person.

- Do not rush major changes or new relationships
- Welcome stories and continuing bonds
- Remember anniversaries and meaningful dates
- Support moments of joy without assuming grief is over

A GENTLE REMINDER

You cannot replace the person they lost or remove the emptiness. You can help make grief less lonely through patience, practical care, and a presence they can trust.

You do not need perfect words. Your steady, compassionate presence matters.

