

SUPPORTING SOMEONE AFTER THE LOSS OF A PARENT

Compassionate guidance for family, friends, and caregivers

The death of a mother, father, stepparent, or parental figure can affect a person's identity, family roles, sense of security, and connection to the past. This loss can be profound at any age, whether the relationship was close, complicated, or unfinished. Compassionate support makes room for the whole story and recognizes that grief may return around family gatherings, milestones, and moments when their parent's presence is deeply missed.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE LOSS

Do not minimize the death because the person is an adult or because their parent was older. A parent's place can remain significant for life.

- Mention their parent by name
- Recognize the loss of guidance and connection
- Ask what they miss most
- Avoid saying, "At least they lived a long life."

WELCOME THE WHOLE STORY

Parent-child relationships can hold love, gratitude, conflict, regret, relief, or many feelings at the same time.

- Listen without judging the relationship
- Do not demand only positive memories
- Allow relief and grief to exist together
- Avoid comparisons with your own experience

NOTICE WHAT ELSE CHANGED

The death of a parent may alter family roles, traditions, caregiving responsibilities, and the person's sense of home.

- Offer help with meals, errands, or paperwork
- Be patient with decisions about belongings
- Recognize changes among siblings and relatives
- Support them through family milestones

CONTINUE TO REMEMBER

Support is often plentiful at first and quieter later, when the permanence of the loss may feel especially real.

- Check in after the funeral and early weeks
- Remember birthdays, holidays, and anniversaries
- Share memories, photographs, or family stories
- Keep reaching out without expecting a reply

A GENTLE REMINDER

A person's age does not determine the depth of parent loss. Your willingness to remember, listen, and stay present can help them feel less alone as family life changes.

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

