

HOW TO BECOME A BETTER LISTENER

Compassionate guidance for family, friends, and caregivers

Listening is one of the most meaningful ways to support someone who is grieving. A caring listener does not need to have answers or find the perfect response. Good listening means offering your full attention, allowing the person to express what they are feeling, and creating a safe space where their grief does not have to be explained, defended, or hurried.

GIVE YOUR FULL ATTENTION

Show through your words and body language that the person and their story matter.

- Put away distractions and make comfortable eye contact
- Listen for understanding rather than planning your reply
- Allow pauses without rushing to fill them
- Notice feelings as well as the words being spoken

LET THEM LEAD

The grieving person should decide what to share, how much to share, and when to stop.

- Use gentle, open-ended questions
- Respect silence or a change of subject
- Let stories and feelings be repeated
- Follow their language when speaking about the person who died

RESPOND WITH CARE

Brief, validating responses show that you are listening without taking control of the conversation.

- “That sounds incredibly difficult.”
- “I am here, and I am listening.”
- “What do you miss most about them?”
- “Take all the time you need.”

COMMON LISTENING MISTAKES

It is easy to shift into advice, reassurance, or comparison when another person’s pain feels uncomfortable.

- Interrupting or quickly changing the subject
- Sharing your own story before hearing theirs
- Correcting feelings or searching for a positive
- Offering solutions when they need to be heard

A GENTLE REMINDER

Being a good listener is not about knowing what to say. It is about helping someone feel heard, accepted, and less alone in their grief.

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

