

# SUPPORTING OUR PEERS

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## *Things Not to Say!*

When faced with a situation where an individual is in need of, or would benefit from support, the most common comment from coworkers/peers/family members is “But I don’t know what to say!” The following statements were provided by participants in crisis intervention classes as examples of statements they have heard that were viewed as less than helpful or potentially harmful.

- You did everything you could.
- You did a good job.
- It was his own fault... he should have...
- There’s a good reason for this.
- He/she is better off now.
- It must have been God’s will.
- You’re a Christian, and your belief will get you through this.
- They are in a better place now.
- I know how you feel.
- This will make you more empathetic.
- Sometimes these things happen.
- You’ll be okay in a few days.
- All you need to do is... (and minimize and simplify the grief).
- You weren’t thinking straight.
- I wouldn’t have handled it that way.
- Don’t worry about it.
- It’s for the best.
- Its part of the job, you’ve got to handle it.
- Get back to work.
- I’ve been in your shoes and I understand.
- You did your job.
- It’s always darkest before the dawn - it’ll look/feel better tomorrow.
- Well, at least \_\_\_\_\_ didn’t happen.
- Don’t worry, everything will be okay. Tomorrow’s another day.
- You are still young; you can have more kids.
- I just knew this would happen to you.
- It’s not that bad.
- You don’t need to be (or feel) upset.
- I know it’s tough now, but you’ve got to be strong.
- Everything is going to be all right.
- Don’t you feel like crying? (And you still have the situation to handle.)
- Are you okay?
- God needed him more than we did.
- You’ll get over this.

# SUPPORTING OUR PEERS CONT.

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- “He was driving too fast” (after a good friend was involved in a fatal accident.)
- It’s been long enough. You should be over this.
- You need to get rid of these items that continually remind you of \_\_\_\_\_ .
- How could you say that kind of thing? It’s wrong to feel like that.
- When this happened to me . . .
- Well, he had a good life.
- It’s not that bad, time will heal.
- Why do you feel that way?
- It was fate.
- Don’t feel that way.
- Come on - smile.
- Have a good cry and get over it.
- “You did a good job,” when problems actually occurred.
- To not say anything or avoid eye contact, pretend nothing happened.

Now then for the ‘But what do I say part’. It obviously depends on the situation, circumstances, and your relationship with the individual. Just remember, most of the time we don’t need to make some comment to try and fix the situation or try to make the individual feel better. Just listen and invite them to share their experience or story. Invite but don’t demand. Sharing or confiding should always be voluntary and at a time and place of the individual’s choosing. Silence can be quite powerful and your ability to sit with the individual and just be present should never be underestimated. A nod, a smile, a touch can convey empathy and support. Recovering from a trauma or other distressing situation, or a culmination of situations, is a process and there is no magic bullet or comment that will ‘fix’ the feelings.