



How to Help Your Hurting Friend:

*What to Say,
What Not to Say,
What to Pray*

Melanie S. Chitwood

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When a friend is going through a hard time, we want to say and do the right thing, the supportive thing.

But sometimes we're unsure of what will be helpful.

Since each person and situation is different, the first step is to pray that God will show you how to lovingly come alongside your friend.

As I've walked the difficult journey of divorce, I've learned that some responses felt supportive and some things really did not.

So I hope these ideas help you to offer even better support to your hurting friend.



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What to Say

- ☛ I'm so sorry you are going through this.*
- ☛ Whatever you need to say or do is okay.*
- ☛ There's no right or wrong way to feel or respond to your situation.*
- ☛ I'm not really sure what to say, but I want you to know I'm here for you.*
- ☛ You can take however long you need to be mad or sad or grieve.*
- ☛ I want to do something helpful, and I'm thinking of doing _____. Would that be helpful to you? If not, can you tell me something that would be?*
- ☛ It's okay to step away from some of your responsibilities right now so you can take care of yourself and this situation.*
- ☛ You're not a burden.*
- ☛ You've never been through this, and you're figuring it out.*
- ☛ You can cry as much as you need to.*



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What Not to Say

- 🍃 **Don't try to solve or fix, even if you have the best advice EVER.** Instead of, "I think you should...", maybe say, "I have some ideas when or if you want to hear them." And wait till you're invited to speak in to your friend's situation. And if they invite you in, still avoid using "shoulds," and try things like, "Have you considered..." or "What if you..." Then you're offering them perspective and options to consider.
- 🍃 **Don't minimize.** Minimizing is a coping mechanism we use in an effort to lessen the blow of the pain. It usually doesn't work very well. Pain is pain. Hard is hard. What's hard for them may not seem hard to you, but it doesn't mean that it isn't extremely difficult for them.
- 🍃 **Don't compare their situation to your situation and hijack the whole situation by launching into your hard story.** Yep, that's a lot of situations. Allow your similar story to help you empathize with her, and resist the urge to share it now. There may be a later time when sharing it is helpful, but for now try something like, "I can only imagine how you're feeling right now. I know it's really hard."



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- 🌿 **Don't offer trite platitudes**—"She's in a better place"; "It's not that bad"; "It's time to move on and be happy"; "Let go and let God." While all of these may be true, they usually miss the mark in conveying the compassion your friend needs.
- 🌿 **Don't give them your time table for their grieving process.** It's different for everyone.
- 🌿 **Let me know if you need anything.** Instead just do something. (When I asked friends about this one, I got mixed responses. Some people thought this was great while others thought it might be too much if a friend just did something. They added that it matters what something is. For example, one person said, "Bringing pizza and salad and paper products for dinner was great. But I didn't want someone in my house doing something." Others added, "If it's a close friend, anything is welcome from them.")



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What to Pray

Heavenly Father,

You know all about what _____(friend's name) is going through. I want to love and support her in a way that eases her pain and makes her burdens feel lighter. Show me how to come alongside her with the help she needs. If it's something to say or not to say, show me. Prompt me with practical ways to show up in her situation. Let her know that she is loved by me, and, more importantly, by You.

Amen.

Father God,

Your Word says that You are “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). _____ (friend's name) has been going through a hard time. She is hurting, and she's weary from the battle. Let her find refuge in You, right now. Give her supernatural strength in You. Let her see You, right now, so that she knows You are with her and will always help her.

Amen.



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What to Pray

Jesus,

You promise to be our Peace (John 14:27). You are the Way when it seems like there's no way. (John 14:26). You are the Light who illuminates the path to take (John 8:12). Be these things to my friend as she goes through this hard time.

Amen.

Jesus,

_____’s heart is completely broken. She is reeling with this unexpected situation, a situation she would do anything not to be in. She feels lost, afraid, and hopeless. Remind her that she can always turn to You, that there's nothing she can't say to You. You see her broken heart and promise You are close to her. You promise to rescue her when her spirit is crushed. I pray she sees You today and feels Your loving care.

Amen.



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My personal writing leans toward encouraging readers in their hard journeys.

Also, I'm a Writing Coach and Editor and you can find out about my services on my website. Also, if you need encouragement and tips in your writing journey, sign-up for my Writing Tips Blog.



www.MelanieSChitwood.com

