SUPPORTING THOSE WHO ARE GRIEVING

“There are two great questions: Where do you hurt? How can I help you?”
~ Edwin Shneidman

Striving to be a support for someone you care about while they are grieving is a difficult but compassionate effort. The tips below may be a starting place for your support.

- Meet the person where he/she is. This may mean identifying your own anxiety as you do so but will allow the person to be genuine, i.e. crying or laughing etc.
- Validate the feelings of the one grieving. Know that you do not need to “fix” the pain, only that you are there for the person. All feelings are O.K.
- Allow the person to talk about the grief/loss, about the memories-both good and not so good, and about the situation which has brought them to this place.
- Avoid arguing or attempting to convince. Feelings which the person is experiencing allow him/her to feel and that is necessary in order to heal, to begin recovery, and to reorganize life.
- Avail yourself to the griever, not in an isolated manner but in ongoing support. Identify time and assistance you are able to share and do so, without second-guessing yourself or what you bring to them.
- Develop a comfort level with silence. Your presence may be all the person needs at this point in time.
- If the grieving person whom you are supporting needs to talk, let them talk. Use good listening skills by focusing on the moment without a need to respond or worrying about what to say. Just listen.
- People who have mourned are able to tell others what is helpful. What to say that is helpful:
  - “I am so sorry for your loss/sadness/news.”
  - “Take all the time you need.”
  - “I wish I had the right words to say to comfort you, but know that I am here for you.”
  - “May I give you a hug?”-ALWAYS ASK THIS FIRST.
- People who have mourned are able to tell others what is not helpful. What not to say:
  - “It was/is God’s will.”
  - “Be strong.”
  - “(Your loved one) would not want you to cry.”
  - “Don’t cry as it will upset (fill in the blank).”
  - “I know how you feel.”
  - “You can always remarry (find another partner, friend, etc.).”