

**A handout for widows and widowers
to give to their family, friends, and others**

“A Few Things I Would Like You to Know about Widowhood”

1. I don't talk about what's really going on because you probably think, just as I thought, that after six months, a year, ten or more years, I should be “over it.” Or that I am over it. Time doesn't completely heal all wounds. The grief of becoming a widow or widower diminishes but it's like a chronic condition that I learn to live with, knowing it can flare up at any time.

2. I know it's hard for you to say “the right thing” when you see me for the first time after my spouse died. But please don't tell me you know exactly how I feel. (Please don't mention you had a cat that died!) There is no one-size-fits-all “right thing.” In fact, it's comforting when you admit, “I don't know what to say.” Tell me you're sorry they died. Tell me my dear one and I are in your prayers. Tell me a story about them. Something wonderful or funny you remember.

3. Don't be afraid to talk about my dear one just because that makes me cry. It's so much worse to have no one say their name. To have so many family members and friends act as if they never existed. My crying doesn't bother me. I've become a world-class crier. I'm not offended or upset if you send an email or call me on their birthday or our wedding anniversary or the date of their death. I love that! Love it, love it, love it!

4. Now my happiest moments can also have a sad undertone to them. My son is graduating from college! My daughter is getting married! I have my first grandchild! And this is happening ... without my beloved spouse by my side. It was supposed to be “us” celebrating this event. And it's “me.” Only “me.” It helps to know you're aware of their absence, too. If we reminisce a little about them.

5. I'm not the same person I was before they died. I live on the same planet but it's a different world without them. This huge loss is made up of countless small losses that are a part of my days. And nights.

6. You can help, and you do help, by graciously inviting me to gatherings even if I continue to say “no thanks.” By your understanding if, at the last minute, I call to say I can't come. By being patient if, when I'm there, I'm distracted sometimes. Even in the middle of a crowd of loved ones, sometimes I'm lonely because, in a very basic way, I am there alone. But your ongoing support and understanding and prayers mean a great deal to me. They continue to make a huge difference as I stumble along. And I'm so very grateful for them. And you.

From:

***On Your Pilgrimage Called Grief
A Guide for Widows and Widowers***

By Bill Dodds