

# HELPING A WIDOW AFTER HER LOSS

## A GUIDE FOR A CLOSE FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER

### IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS DEATH:

- Show up and stay near her.
- Notify other immediate family and friends of his passing for her.
- **Call employers to notify them of her loss, if applicable.**
- Arrange to pick up belongings at his work, if necessary.
- Be available by remaining in the background - be a presence she can lean on when needed.
- **Listen to her fears and concerns - don't worry about what to say or do - simply be there.**
- Sit in silence with her during strong emotions - do not try to find words to ease her pain.
- **Stay overnight if you can (or stay late and show-up early each day).**

### DURING THE FUNERAL/MEMORIAL PERIOD:

- Make phone calls as necessary and take all incoming calls until you assign this task to others.
- Remind her to take care of herself, including rest (time is likely in a vacuum right now for her).
- **Drive her everywhere - expect her to be distracted, dazed, or despondent at times - this is normal.**
- Accompany her everywhere and take notes for her.
- Be a sounding board later so she can talk through decisions.
- Run her basic errands while others are visiting.
- **Create two lists using notebooks or pads: Food & Flowers and Those Who Called.**
- Assign others to be in charge of these lists each day to record this activity (keep the list in the same place each day for easy recording as items often arrive together or interruptions happen impeding accurate recordkeeping.)
- Greet visitors upon arrival until assigning this task to other family members each day.
- Help maintain organization of food, flowers, and cards.

- **Take the trash out regularly.**
- Make sure pets are walked and fed.
- Assist with maintaining an orderly home as visitors come and go (check t-paper; wipe bathrooms, empty wastebaskets, put out fresh towels).
- Have someone watch the home during the service (theft sometimes happens during this time).
- **Don't be afraid to say the name of her husband or to use the words "died" or "death" with her.**
- Share stories, have quiet coffee or tea time together. Try to sit outside.
- **Take her for walks periodically throughout the day to allow her some visitor down-time.**
- Avoid judging - don't tell her how to react or handle her emotions or situation. Let her release it.
- Let her know you support her decisions and will help when asked.
- **Help her maintain her daily routine as best a possible by offering to sit with visitors.**

### AFTER THE MEMORIAL PERIOD:

- Help her with thank-you's, social media responses, etc.
- **Share meals and schedule regular ongoing visits each week.**
- Schedule walks, self-care activities, and other outings with her.
- Help her schedule meetings to meet with professionals, find documents, and get organized.
- **Help her keep a calendar of scheduled activities and reminders.**
- Offer to drive her to important meetings or appointments that are likely to trigger strong emotions (the Social Security office, picking up an urn, meeting with her attorney, etc.)
- Help with flower removal, removing her husband's personal belongings when ready, etc.
- **Make a personal commitment to help her get through this. Vow to be her anchor in her darkest hours.**