Being a Caring Presence

What you can say..........What you can do...

(Ways of effectively providing Support to others)

All of us at some time may find ourselves in the position of providing emotional support to someone in crisis. You can effectively support someone with your caring presence by remembering a few simple guidelines.

1. Before you begin, close your eyes and take a few slow, deep breaths. This allows you a moment to relaxed and become focused.

2. Acknowledge the situation. This communicates you care and are open to hearing the details of the pain.

3. Be honest about your own thoughts, concerns and feelings - particularly your helplessness and your honest desire to support that person in whatever manner best meets their needs.

4. Validate the person's feelings. In a crisis, people need to know that sadness, confusion, anger, fear, numbness and helplessness are normal reactions to the abnormally stressful event of their loss. Statements such as these are helpful:
   • It must really hurt...
   • I can really hear your pain...
   • It sounds like you're feeling...

5. When in doubt, ask questions:
   • How is that for you?
   • How do you feel right now?
   • Can you tell me more about that?
   • Am I intruding?
   • What do you need?
   • What's been the most difficult for you?
   • When is the hardest time of day?

6. When you are responding to a person facing a crisis situation, be sure to use statements such as:
   • I feel...
   • I believe...
   • I would want/need...
   • I acknowledge...

   Rather than:
   • You should/shouldn’t...
   • I know just how you feel...