

# Dos and Don'ts

# How you can help those widowed young

At Care for the Family we've spoken with many people who have been widowed young. We listened as they told us what helps, and what doesn't help. Here's what they would love you to know.

## ✓ DO

✓ **Do** talk to me – even if you don't know what to say. Knowing you are sorry is a good start.

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✓ **Do** keep in touch; keep phoning especially as weeks turn into months and years. Be available.

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✓ **Do** talk about my partner. I love to hear your memories of him/her.

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✓ **Do** think carefully before you speak. I'm feeling vulnerable at the moment and insensitivity could pull me down very low.

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✓ **Do** listen – it can be more important than what you say. Sometimes I need to know that I am heard.

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✓ **Do** give practical support. I'm not able to cope with routines at the moment so providing meals or help at home and with my children is vital.

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✓ **Do** offer specific help – "I'll pick the children up on Friday, take them out, give them tea and bring them back at 6."

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## ✗ DON'T

✗ **Don't** avoid me – it hurts so much when you cross the road when you see me coming rather than be willing to face me.



✗ **Don't** phone and just say, "Let me know if I can help" and leave it at that.

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✗ **Don't** worry about feeling 'awkward' – be normal, yourself, my friend – I am still the same person.

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✗ **Don't** come out with platitudes, trite answers or comments. Right now, all I want is to have him/her back.

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✗ **Don't** say things like, "You can always marry again, you're still young".

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## ✓ DO

✓ **Do** still talk about everyday things that matter as well. I'm still interested in you and what is going on around me, but 'small talk' can seem very trivial.

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✓ **Do** understand that it will take time for me even to begin to adjust to life as is has to be for me from now on.

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✓ **Do** give me space to be as I am, tears and all. Don't try to discourage my tears and please be willing to cry with me too.

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✓ **Do** be sensitive and aware, for example with Christmas cards – a mention of my partner will let me know that you miss him/her at this time too.

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✓ **Do** remember my children! They can sometimes be neglected as they may not be so willing to talk.

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✓ **Do** invite me out to coffee or lunch – just to change the scene for a while.



## ✗ DON'T



✗ **Don't** overload me with responsibilities – for a while it will be all I can cope with to get out of bed and get dressed.

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✗ **Don't** wait to be asked for help – initially there is so much help I need with just about everything.

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✗ If you have a faith, **don't** be super-spiritual and feel you have to defend God's case.

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✗ **Don't** feel you have to do something – just be there.

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✗ **Don't** say, "Be strong" – it means, "Don't share your pain, keep it to yourself".

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✗ **Don't** expect me to be over it – I will never get over it, but I may find a 'new normal' in time.

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✗ **Don't** ignore the loss, or avoid asking questions about the person who has died.

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✗ **Don't** avoid the issue publicly – in schools, churches etc.

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Find out more: [www.cff.org.uk/family-life/bereavement-support](http://www.cff.org.uk/family-life/bereavement-support)

Care for the Family

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