

## 64 of the Worst Things Ever Said to a Griever From *What's Your Grief* Blog

We recently asked our Facebook readers the following questions: “*What is the best thing anyone has said to you in your grief?*” and “*What is the worst thing anyone has said to you in your grief?*”

As the title of this post suggests, today we’re talking about some of the negative comments that were shared with us. Honestly, we’ve been talking about what *not* to say to people who are grieving since WYG’s inception. Most people get why this is a conversation worth having, but we do hear from our fair share of critics every time we do. I don’t know what to tell you other than, we believe there is some benefit in having an “*Oh no he (or she) didn’t!*” kind of moment, and don’t bother telling us there isn’t because we won’t believe you.

As they say, the struggle is real, and sometimes it helps to have space where we can connect and support one another over such a common experience. Sure, after writing several articles on this topic, some of what we have to say is redundant but – you know what? – it bears repeating. This conversation never ceases to be necessary because every day new people become bereaved and new people take on the position of ‘supportive friend or family member’.

Being a supportive family member or friend can be tough because what to say and do in this position isn’t cut and dry. When reading through the responses we received for ‘best’ and ‘worst’ comments, we realized this concept can be downright perplexing. We noticed that while some statements are objectively good or terrible, others seem only subjectively so. And some statements made BOTH the best and the worst lists.

So what factors make a comment go one way or the other? Well, for starters, comments that are ill-timed, said *by* the wrong person, said *to* the wrong person, or simply thoughtless (see the chart below) can easily get people in trouble.

## How do I know what to say to my loved one who's grieving?

Generally okay to say...

May be okay to say someday, but not right now...

Objectively true, but not helpful...

Okay to say if you know your audience...

Okay to say if the grieving person says it first...

If you're trying to find a silver lining, don't bother...

Never okay to say.

"I love you"

"You'll grow from this."

"Everyone dies eventually."

"This f-ing sucks."

"There's comfort in knowing he's no longer suffering."

"At least you can have another baby."

"It was her fault."

Certain things, like "I love you" and "I'm here for you" are almost always okay to say. People also appreciate when you share fond memories and say kind things about their loved one.

Timing is everything. After a death, it's often best to hold off on sharing certain truths, comments, and conversations until some time has passed.

The truth is not always the most comforting. Especially when you consider, the truth of a grieving person's reality is often the greatest source of their pain.

If you know the grieving person pretty well, you can probably guess how comments that are straightforward, sarcastic, or religious will go over. If you don't know the person then - when in doubt, leave it out.

Only the grieving person can decide how and when they will find comfort and meaning in their loss. Walk beside them, do not try to lead.

If your statement begins with "At least..." don't say it. Trust us on this one.

Never say anything that is blaming, shaming, minimizing, or cruel about the person who died or to the people who grieve them.

## 64 of the Worst Things Ever Said to a Griever

1. *"I thought you'd be over it by now!"*
2. *"People have been through worse."*
3. *"Buck up!"*
4. *"Now she will never go to heaven. Why did the family burn her spirit?"* [After hearing my loved one was cremated]
5. *"It's not a big deal because, literally, everyone dies."*
6. *"Get over it."*
7. *"I'll call you, check in on you, and we can get together."* [But then never called]
8. *"It's kind of like you got divorced."*
9. *"I hear that's the worst way to die."*
10. *"If my child died, I would be happy because I would know he is in heaven."*
11. *"You have to be strong."*
12. *"Now you can live your own life rather than taking care of a disabled child."*
13. Nothing [Made no acknowledgment]
14. *"What did he go and do now?"* [Said to my mom after her son died]
15. *"Don't be depressed. No one likes people who are depressed"*
16. *"You've lost so many people, it probably doesn't even phase you anymore."*
17. My phone rang and it was a church "friend". She asked me what was wrong, I told her my mother had just passed away a few hours before and she said, *"Oh, don't let anyone go through her house until I get there. I want to see what she had."*
18. *"You should be rejoicing!"*
19. *"At least he made it to 92."*
20. *"Look in the bright side!"*
21. *"We all have problems."*
22. When telling someone how I believe seeing cardinals is a sign: *"That's not theologically possible."*
23. *"What did you think was going to happen? He was a drug addict!"*
24. *"Well, you know your father WILL marry again."* [Weeks after my mom died]

25. *"That's life!"*
26. *"You've lost all of your joy."*
27. *"Everything happens for a reason."*
28. *"You need to stop feeling sorry for yourself and move on".*
29. *"Your sad dreams and nightmares aren't normal."*
30. *"Wow, they're dropping like flies!"* [On hearing of my husband's death]
31. *"You're too young to know what real grief is."*
32. *"I forgive you for being such a B!@tch. I know you're grieving."*
33. *"I know how you feel."*
34. *"God never gives you more than you can handle."*
35. In reference to a memory of my mum, *"Just put it back in the drawer, it doesn't belong here."*
36. *"I don't want to sound mean, but you need to move forward. She's not coming back."*
37. *"Don't be sad when there's so much to be grateful for."*
38. *"God needed him more than you do."*
39. *"She's in a better place."*
40. *"Well, you're the man of the house now."* [Said to my 12-year-old son]
41. *"I am going to hang up now – call me back when you stop crying."*
42. *"Everyone's just waiting for you to snap because you have to."*
43. After our 20 yr old daughter died in a traffic accident, a lady said she knew how we felt because their dog had died the week before!
44. *"This is a day for celebration!"* [At my mom's memorial service]
45. *"If I went through everything you did, I'd have killed myself."*
46. *"That's why you shouldn't have had a lot of kids"*
47. *"Remember, others have it worse than you."*
48. *"At least you're young, you can have another."*
49. *"Snap out of it! People die."*
50. *"Give me \$20 and I'll give you a workbook."*
51. That my loved one who wasn't baptized was floating around in "purgatory."
52. *"You can enter the room again when you stop crying."*

53. *“You’re being selfish.”*
54. *“I can’t imagine what it was like for your mum when she died.”*
55. *“It was her time.”*
56. *“Even this will pass.”*
57. *“Life should be more than just grief – let it go.”*
58. When my mother had a moment of feeling better in her final days (i.e. terminal lucidity) the hospice worker told her, *“People always feel better just before they die.”*
59. *“Losing your husband is nothing compared to the death of a parent. You can always replace your husband.”*
60. Six months after the passing of my 18-year-old son, a woman that used to work for our family business (knew us well) walked up to me in the grocery store and asked me which son it was.
61. *“Why are you still sad for your son?”*
62. Less than 24 hours after my dad passed his wife said, *“He kept saying all day, that he thought you were mad at him because you hadn’t called in a week.”*
63. *“This was obviously what she wanted.”* [About a loved one who died by suicide]
64. Someone I work with asked me if it was a good or bad thing my husband had died.