



HOW TO TALK TO A GRIEVING FATHER

A Guide for Family & Friends Who Want to Help

You want to help. You want to say the right thing.

But when a father loses a child, most people don't know what he actually needs to hear.

Here's what happens: Everyone checks on his partner. Everyone asks how she's doing. And the dad? He becomes invisible.



He looks "fine." He's back at work. He's holding it together. So people assume he's okay.

But inside, he's carrying a weight no one sees.

This guide will help you support the grieving father in your life **without accidentally making him feel more alone.**

Don't Ask This

Ask This Instead

"How are you doing?"

Too vague. Forces him to say "fine" even when he's not.

"How are you holding up today?"

Acknowledges it's hard and gives permission for honesty.

"Are you okay?"

Puts pressure on him to reassure you that he's okay.

"How are you managing?"

Recognizes he's in survival mode, not "okay."

"At least you have other kids"

Minimizes his loss. Every child is irreplaceable.

"Tell me about [child's name]"

Gives him permission to say their name out loud.

"Everything happens for a reason"

There is no reason that makes this okay.

"This shouldn't have happened to you"

Validates that this is unfair and wrong.

"How is your wife/partner doing?"

Only asks about her. Makes him invisible.

"I wanted to check on YOU. I know

everyone asks about her" *Acknowledges his grief matters too, without forcing a specific answer.*

"You're so strong"

Reinforces the pressure to hide his pain.

"You don't have to be strong around

me" *Gives permission to not be "fine."*

"Time heals all wounds"

It doesn't. The ache doesn't leave.

"I know this doesn't get easier"

Acknowledges the permanence of grief.

"Let me know if you need anything"

Too vague. He won't ask.

"Can I drop off dinner Tuesday at 6?"

Specific offer he can say yes or no to.

"You need to move on"

He's not moving on. He's learning to carry it.

"Take all the time you need"

Removes the pressure to "get over it."

"God has a plan" / "They're in a better place"

Religious comfort that may not align with his beliefs or help.

"I'm here. No words needed."

Sometimes presence is enough.



THE TRUTH ABOUT GRIEVING FATHERS:

A grieving dad doesn't need you to fix his grief or find meaning in his loss.

He needs you to **see him** when everyone else looks past him. He needs you to **say his child's name** when the world wants him to move on. He needs you to **check on him specifically**, not just "the family."

The questions above aren't magic words. Rather they break through the invisibility that makes a grieving father feel alone.



REMEMBER:

- ✓ Grieving fathers often feel invisible. Most people check on the mother, but rarely the father.
 - ✓ He's likely carrying **Protection Failure Guilt (PFG)** - the deep shame that he couldn't protect his child from death, his partner from devastation, or his other children from grief. More about [PFG](#).
 - ✓ Asking for help feels like admitting failure out loud. So he stays silent.
 - ✓ Just checking on HIM specifically - not his partner, not "how's the family" can make all the difference.
 - ✓ Say the child's name. It reminds him they're still remembered.
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THE BEST THING YOU CAN SAY:

"I'm thinking of you and [child's name]. How are YOU holding up?"



Created by Azher Rubbani (Hashim's dad, 20 years later)
StillDad™ | Resources for grieving fathers [HERE](#)

"Being a dad doesn't end when your child dies."