

LEARN HOW TO GIVE AND RECEIVE COMFORT

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Each of us experiences our share of disappointments and setbacks in life but giving and receiving comfort can still be awkward. We struggle to find the appropriate words or gestures to express our concern, even though we have so many opportunities to practice.

Sometimes we pull away because we feel overwhelmed. Sometimes we try to be helpful, but our efforts backfire and make the situation more difficult.

Learn how to be there for someone who needs you and accept their kindness when you're going through challenging times. Consider these tips for becoming more skillful at giving and receiving comfort.

Tips on Giving Comfort

When misfortune strikes someone you care about, it can be just as stressful as if it was happening to you directly. Remember that even if you feel helpless, your presence alone may be reassuring to a friend or family member in need.

Use these strategies when you wish to comfort someone:

- 1. Assess your relationship. Different situations require different ways of providing comfort.** In addition to thinking about the nature of your relationship, take into account your capacity and the temperament of others.
- 2. Listen closely.** Trying to understand the needs of others will help you to figure out what to do next. Pay attention to their body language as well as their words.

3. **Validate their feelings.** Letting someone know that their feelings matter and helping them to feel accepted usually provides welcome relief. While you'll probably provide deeper validation to a family member or close friend, you can find something sincere to say in almost any situation.
4. **Offer sympathy.** Ask yourself if someone seems to be looking for compassion rather than advice. **You can share a kind word even if you're unable to fix their troubles.**
5. **Provide encouragement.** Maybe your friend is ready for a pep talk and reassurance. If they're receptive, start brainstorming solutions and looking forward to happier times.
6. **Stay focused.** You may be affected by someone else's losses or they may remind you of your own fears. **While you're comforting others, keep them and their needs foremost in your mind.**
7. **Maintain boundaries.** It may be okay to share your story and opinions as long as you remember that others are responsible for making their own decisions. Also, if you find yourself becoming overwhelmed by someone else's tribulations, it could be a sign that you need to step back.
8. **Suggest counseling.** You can guide someone toward other resources even when you're unable to help them yourself. If you're close to someone and they seem open to the idea, suggest professional therapy.

Tips on Receiving Comfort

There are many reasons why you may resist consolation even when you need it most. Remember that accepting help from others benefits them too. You're allowing them

to know the joy of giving.

These techniques can help you accept comforting gestures:

1. **Examine your beliefs.** Are you afraid of appearing vulnerable or do you feel that you're unworthy of generosity? Adjusting your attitude can make it easier to accept feedback and assistance.
2. **Ask for help. Practice telling others what you need.** You'll be more likely to fulfill your wishes, and you'll make it easier for those around you to decide what to do.
3. **Be gracious.** As long as someone is being sincere, appreciate their generosity. Genuine caring is valuable even when it lacks any poetry.
4. **Pay it forward.** Sometimes we're so uncomfortable with receiving that we try to pay others back instantly. **Try simply appreciating what they've done for you.** You'll probably find a natural opportunity in the future to do a similar favor for someone else.

Hardships are a part of life but being able to share support reduces some of the sting. Reach out to others and be grateful when they do the same for you.