



ENGAGING WITH GRIEF

The practices we observe on Tisha B'Av are modeled on traditional Jewish practices of mourning after the loss of a loved one, such as not wearing leather shoes, not bathing, not listening to music and sitting close to the ground. The intention of this modeling is to artificially create an atmosphere of grief and mourning as we commemorate the loss of the Temple in Jerusalem and a variety of other tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people over the centuries, including the Holocaust, the Crusades, pogroms and more.

Commemorating communal loss can stir up emotions around personal loss or challenges for members of the community participating in this communal mourning. Grief is difficult to navigate for both those experiencing it and their support systems. Supporting someone you love through current or resurfaced grief can be challenging. Someone may experience grief for many reasons, such as the loss of a loved one, a traumatic event, a personal ailment or in relation to mental health challenges.

It can be hard to know the best thing to say to someone who is grieving. While there is no perfect response, it can help to be prepared with different questions and phrases to engage in the most effective and sensitive way possible with people who are suffering.





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Here are five things you can say to someone grieving on Tisha B'Av and all year round:

1. I am so sorry for your loss.

It may sound simple, but it really helps to acknowledge what has happened, validate their feelings and demonstrate you care. This can be as brief as saying "I'm so sorry for your loss," or you just heard about their loss and have been thinking about them.

2. I wish I had the right words; just know I care.

Recognize it is hard to know what to say and remind them you are here to support them. In doing so, you remind them they are not alone.

3. I don't know how you feel, or I can't imagine how you feel, but I am here for you.

You don't want to make assumptions about what they are feeling, nor do you want to assume you can change what they are going through. Sharing phrases like this can offer them some comfort.

4. What do you need?

Ask them how they want to be supported, so you're showing up for them in a way that is meaningful for them.

5. Nothing

Sometimes the best thing to do is to just be with the person. This can be as, if not more, impactful than knowing the right thing to say.

