



WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS

A MINISTRY FOR THOSE IN THE SECOND HALF OF LIFE IN THE KY CONFERENCE

LOSS OF FRIENDSHIPS

In my lifetime I have had to move several times. Moving is hard. While the physical labor is hard, I believe the emotional pain is even harder. And the hardest for me was the loss of dear friendships due to miles of separation.

Some widows lose 75% of their friendships after their spouse's death. The loss of your best friend and companion can be overwhelming. Add to that the loss of friends, and it can be devastating.

Here are some of the reasons people give for not continuing a friendship with a widow followed by thoughts the widow may have when hearing them:

We though you needed space

- 50% of my world is gone. I have plenty of space now.
- What do I need space for?

We are so busy

- Our calendars reveal our priorities.
- You weren't too busy before Bill died.

We live in a couple's society

- Yes, we do, but I still enjoy going out to dinner or a movie with you.

We are crying and don't want to make you cry

- Come join my world and we will cry together.
- Just coming by or calling and telling me you don't know what to say is better than nothing.

- Silent presence is better than nothing.
- “The friend who holds your hand and says the wrong thing is made of dearer stuff than the one who stays away.”
- What are we told by our Heavenly Father: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

Miriam Neff in her book, From One Widow to Another, lists Seven Tips for You to Help Widows:

1. **Please do stay connected.** There is already a huge hole in our universe. Do not assume we need space to grieve.
2. **Please do say you are sorry for our loss.** We would rather you tell us you do not know what to say then tell us your story of losing your friend or even close relative. We may be able to listen to your story later, but not now. Do not tell us you understand.
3. **Do call and ask specifically,** “Can we go for a walk together” or “May I run errands for you?” or “Meet you for coffee?” **Do not say,** “Call me if you need anything.”
4. **Do refer to our husband’s acts or words** – serious or humorous. We are so comforted by knowing our husband has not been forgotten. Do not leave our husbands out of the conversation.
5. **Invite us to anything.** We may decline but will appreciate being asked. Do not assume we no longer want to participate in couples’ events.
6. **Do accept that we are where we are.** Marriages are brief, long, healthy, dysfunctional, intense, and remote. Death comes suddenly or in tiny increments over years. Again, our experiences are so different, as are we. So is our journey through grief. Do not assume we go through the outlined grief process “by the book.”
7. **Walk the talk.** Do not make “conversation only” offers such as “We will call you and we’ll go out to dinner” – and then not follow up. Yes, we are sensitive in our grieving, but we’d rather hear you say, “I’ve been thinking of you” than make an offer just to say something.

You might want to make a copy of the above as a reminder to contact those recent widows or widowers who come into your life. You do not want to add the loss of a friendship to their grief.

Pat Brandenstein is co-founder of Wings of Hope Windows Ministry, a 501©3 with Chapters of Widows in Cheatham, Rutherford, and Franklin Counties. Wings of Hope assists widows in forming chapters in their communities and churches in developing widowed persons ministries. For more information, contact Brandenstein at 931-636-4359 or brandensteinr@bellsouth.net. Webpage: wingsofhopewidowministry.com, Facebook and Instagram: Wings of Hope Widows Ministry