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questions
answered

HOW TO HELP SOMEONE GOING THROUGH DIVORCE

The purpose of this Stowe guide is to offer advice for helping a friend or loved one through divorce.

There's no doubt that divorce is stressful and emotional, and a time when you really need a strong support network of friends and family around you. But, unless you've been through divorce yourself, you may not know the best way to support a loved one when their marriage has ended.

So, we've compiled a guide that goes beyond platitudes and shares advice on how to offer more meaningful support to someone going through divorce.

How to help someone going through divorce

What to say to someone going through divorce

Knowing what to say to someone going through divorce can be difficult. You don't want to say the wrong thing and make them feel worse but saying nothing isn't an option either.

While it's not a good idea to press for details, it is okay to ask questions like how are you doing, how have you been feeling, would you like to talk about things? But remember not to take it personally if they don't want to talk.

Be proactive. Don't simply ask if there's anything you can do. That puts the onus on them to think of something and ask for your help. Small thoughtful acts can make all the difference.

Follow their lead. Your friend may feel relieved and optimistic about the future so mirror their language and tone.

What not to say to someone going through divorce

Resist the temptation to bad-mouth their ex or share what you really thought about their relationship. It's unconstructive at best, and you risk invalidating your friend's feelings and experiences.

Think before you share updates about your partner, family, and lifestyle. Does your friend need to hear about your idyllic day out or listen to your frustrations about your partner?

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Empathy is helpful, but sympathy quickly sounds like pity. You may admire your friend's resilience but reminding them of it every time you speak only highlights what a difficult time they're going through.

Be supportive of your friend's choices, even if you disagree. Now is not the time to tell them you think they've made a mistake.

Choose your language carefully and avoid out-dated or stereotypical terms like 'broken home' and 'divorcee'.

Keep inviting them out, even if they say no

Connection to friends is so important. But divorce can cause divisions in friendships, especially where relationships were originally forged alongside an ex-partner. As a result, your friend may find that their social circle had changed.

By showing up now when your friend is going through a challenging time you let them know that you're here for them and that they can count on your friendship.

You may get a couple of knock-backs. If so, don't insist, even if you think it's best for them. Just keep including them in plans. When the time is right, they'll know who they can turn to when they want company.

Check in with them regularly

Regular contact with loved ones in the early stages of divorce and beyond, can help to combat feelings of loneliness and isolation that sometimes surface during divorce.

It's likely some people won't reach out to your friend at all, some will reach out but will want all the details, while others will offer only meaningless platitudes. So, your consistent contact is important.

If you're close enough, your friend may appreciate some levity and candour. It doesn't always need to be deep and meaningful, follow your friend's lead.

If you usually exchange memes, leave voice notes, or send each other podcast and tv recommendations, continue to do that. Check in on your friend often and keep communication open.

Need more information?

Call our Client Care Team on **0330 838 7456** to speak with one of our specialist family lawyers or visit www.stowefamilylaw.co.uk

Ref: 214/0123

Listen

Lending an ear and giving your friend undivided attention and time to vent is so important.

Remember to listen with focus. Don't judge or take it upon yourself to fix their problems, and don't interrupt.

Truly listening to your friend will help them to get things off their chest, organise their thoughts and identify what their next steps are.

By listening you'll also gain a better understanding of how your friend feels about the divorce so you can shake off assumptions and give them the right support.

Practical support

When divorce adds a new layer of life admin and change to already busy lives, pragmatism and problem solving can be as valuable as emotional support.

Think about their logistical needs. Can you help them look for a new home or pack their things? Can you look after the children while they tackle the long list of jobs? Can you cook them dinner, so they have one less thing to think about?

Consider what practical support you can offer your friend to lighten the load and free up their time and energy.

Assume nothing

While divorce can be painful and challenging for some, for others it's a positive outcome and the beginning of a new chapter. Don't assume how your friend feels about it or reflect your thoughts about how you'd feel.

The best way to support someone going through divorce is to meet them where they are. Bridge the gap between your expectations and what your friend is really going through so that you can support them in a way that truly helps them.



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