

Condolence Etiquette Guide

How to offer comfort with grace and sincerity

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How to offer comfort, what to say, what to avoid — a gentle guide for friends and community.

VISITING THE BEREAVED FAMILY

Thoughtful things to do:

- ✓ Visit within the first few days if you are close to the family.
- ✓ Dress modestly — white or muted colours are respectful.
- ✓ Bring fruits, dry fruits, or flowers — avoid sweets.
- ✓ Offer to help with practical tasks: cooking, groceries, child care.
- ✓ Sit quietly and let the family lead the conversation.
- ✓ Listen more than you speak. Presence matters more than words.
- ✓ Mention a fond memory of the deceased — it is welcome and comforting.

Things to avoid:

- ✗ Do not ask how or why they died unless the family volunteers this.
- ✗ Do not offer unsolicited opinions on medical decisions made.
- ✗ Do not compare their loss to yours unless it is very relevant.
- ✗ Do not rush the family to 'move on' or 'be strong'.
- ✗ Do not take photographs at the home unless requested.
- ✗ Do not bring alcohol or non-vegetarian food to a mourning home.
- ✗ Do not make the conversation about yourself.

WHAT TO SAY — AND WHAT NOT TO SAY

"I am so sorry for your loss."	"Everything happens for a reason."
"I am here for you — whatever you need."	"I know exactly how you feel."
"[Name] was such a beautiful soul."	"At least they didn't suffer / lived a full life."
"Take all the time you need."	"You need to be strong for the children."
"I'll bring dinner on Thursday."	"Let me know if you need anything." (too vague)
"It's okay to cry. I'm here."	"They are in a better place now."

WRITING A CONDOLENCE MESSAGE

A written condolence — even a few lines — carries lasting comfort. The family will often reread it in quieter moments.

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Dear [Name],

I was deeply saddened to hear of [Name of Deceased]'s passing. [He/She/They] was [a brief memory or quality]. The world is quieter without [him/her/them].

Please know that you and your family are in my thoughts and prayers. I am here for you in whatever way may help.

*With love and respect,
[Your Name]*

PRACTICAL WAYS TO HELP BEYOND WORDS

- ◆ Organise a meal roster with friends so the family is fed for 2 weeks.
- ◆ Help with airport pickups for family arriving from out of town.
- ◆ Assist with printing and distributing condolence notices.
- ◆ Quietly manage logistics on the day of cremation (parking, seating).
- ◆ Check in weeks after the death — not just in the first few days.
- ◆ Remember anniversaries — a message on the 40th day or 6-month mark is profound.
- ◆ Offer to accompany the family for Asthi Visarjan if they wish.

The greatest gift you can give a grieving person is your steady, quiet presence — not perfect words, but a faithful heart.