

# Ten Action Steps

When Grief Comes to Town · Series One · Plain tools for anyone who wants to help

**Grief should bring people closer. Fear is what makes them back away.**

These ten steps are drawn from the Survivor Network's first series, *When Grief Comes to Town*. Each step is plain, specific, and something any person — chaplain, officer, neighbor, or friend — can do this week.

## 01

### Say Something. Use Their Name.

*"If you have to choose between saying something and saying nothing, say something."*

- ◆ Say the officer's name out loud — today, not someday.
- ◆ Use the name in conversation, not just in ceremony.
- ◆ Say: "I've been thinking about [name] a lot lately."
- ◆ Ask the family to tell you something about them.
- ◆ Do not wait for the right moment. There isn't one.

## 02

### The Funeral Is Not the Finish Line

*"The first week is crowded. The third month can be lonely."*

- ◆ Call at 30 days — a personal call, not a check-box.
- ◆ Call again at 90 days, when support often fades.
- ◆ Mark the 6-month date on your calendar and act on it.
- ◆ Plan something specific for the first-year anniversary.
- ◆ Assign one person to hold the calendar and follow through.

## 03

### Do Not Make the Family Ask

*"Let me know if you need anything" gives the grieving person another job."*

- ◆ Name the day, name the task — then ask if it works.
- ◆ Bring a specific meal on a specific day.
- ◆ Mow the lawn, shovel the walk — without being asked.
- ◆ Offer specific rides to specific places.
- ◆ Call on a scheduled day at a scheduled time.

## 04

### The Department Grieves Too

*"A fallen officer leaves more than an empty chair at home."*

- ◆ Acknowledge the loss by name at roll call — regularly.
- ◆ Check in individually with officers close to the fallen.
- ◆ Give officers language: it is not weakness to struggle.
- ◆ Make chaplain access easy — no appointment required.
- ◆ Watch for officers who go quiet and pull away.

## 05

**The Children Are Listening***"Children remember who kept showing up."*

- ◆ Use the parent's name naturally — not just in ceremony.
- ◆ Remember children's birthdays and school milestones.
- ◆ Ask them to share a memory — don't assume they won't.
- ◆ Check in at the start of each school year and before holidays.
- ◆ Invite older children to department memorial events.

## 06

**Neighbors Have a Job Too***"Care should not be left only to agencies and organizations."*

- ◆ Bring food — a specific meal, on a specific day.
- ◆ Take on a recurring task: lawn care, mail, trash.
- ◆ Send a card on the anniversary — just the name, just the date.
- ◆ Show up during the holidays, which are often the hardest stretch.
- ◆ Come back. Let the family know you have not forgotten.

## 07

**Use the Calendar***"Grief keeps dates."*

- ◆ Write down the death anniversary and act on it every year.
- ◆ Record the officer's birthday and family birthdays.
- ◆ Note the children's key school milestones.
- ◆ Plan for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Memorial Day, Police Week.
- ◆ Reach out before the hard date arrives — not after.

## 08

**Do Not Turn Grief Into a Speech***"Most grieving people need fewer speeches and more steady people."*

- ◆ One short sentence is almost always better than a long one.
- ◆ "I've been thinking about you." Then wait.
- ◆ "I don't have anything that fixes this. I'm just here."
- ◆ Avoid explaining the loss, comparing it, or offering reasons.
- ◆ Leaving quietly is better than filling every moment with noise.

## 09

**When the Community Does Not Know What To Do***"Most people are not heartless. They are untrained."*

- ◆ Say something. Do not wait for the perfect words.
- ◆ Use the name. The person who died is still part of the conversation.
- ◆ Make specific offers — name the day and the task.
- ◆ Come back. Grief does not end in a week.
- ◆ Ask the chaplain. They have seen this before.

## 10

**Keep the Circle Strong***"The family should not have to carry the name alone."*

- ◆ Assign one person to hold the remembrance calendar.
- ◆ Acknowledge the anniversary every year — a call, a card, a presence.
- ◆ Include the fallen in department events without the family asking.
- ◆ Review the circle every six months: who is still connected?
- ◆ Build acknowledgment into culture — ordinary decency, repeated.

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