

## Practical Do's & Don'ts

### **Helpful things To say:**

- Start off with what you are feeling yourself, personally. Don't try to and make up words that the family member might be experiencing or wants to hear.
- Put yourself in their shoes (figuratively)—what would be comforting to hear at this moment?
- Let the family member express thoughts first. Then you can add to them.
- “What a tragedy this is for you and your family.”
- “I heard about what happened and felt compelled to come and see you.”
- “How tough this must be for you and your family.”
- “I was shocked when I heard the news.”
- “I can't imagine what you are going through.”
- “My heart hurts for you and your family.”
- “I feel terrible about what happened.”
- All right to say NOTHING...you may be entirely honest in saying “I just don't know what to say.”
- Use tact and sensitivity...

### **NOT helpful things to say:**

- “It must have been their time.”
- “They lived a good life.”
- “It must have been God's will.”
- “They wouldn't want you to be sad about all this.”
- “I know just how you're feeling...my \*fill in the blank\* died last year.”
- “It's probably for the best (if injuries were not survivable).”
- “I know just how you feel.” (No, you really don't...)
- “Just keep good thoughts and look for the positives.”
- “You just sit there and let me take care of everything.”
- “God must have wanted a \*fill in the blank\*.”
- “You can always have another son/daughter/get another dog.”
- “The worst is over...”
- Do not say anything you wouldn't want to hear if you were in their situation.