What can I offer the grieving family?

Grieving is a personal experience. When someone we know, or someone close to someone we know, passes away it can be unclear and even stressful about what we can or are supposed to do and say. Here are some suggestions, from a reader's personal experience, about what is the most helpful.

Upon hearing the news of the passing

- Send a card *in the mail* right away. This alleviates the awkwardness of running into the grieving person in public and feeling compelled to say something that may upset them. Instead, they can thank you for the card you sent.
- Facebook messages or emails *do not* constitute a hand-written letter.

Things to bring to their house

- If you would like to bring food to the grieving family or person, bring foods that don't require a lot of preparation or clean-up: juice, crackers, cereal, soup, chocolate, coffee, tea, noodles, peanut-butter, seltzer, apples and oranges. Consider whether there are children in the house when choosing items.
- Avoid bringing sandwiches or casseroles in your good cookware. If the food does not get eaten it gets wasted, and it adds the hassle of cleaning and returning unmarked dishware to their owners.
- Other welcome items might be: paper towels, toilet paper, tissues, aspirin, cough drops, CDs of nice music, soap, cups and napkins - items that might be useful to a house full of guests or family members. (*note: if this all sounds expensive, consider the cost of a delivered bouquet of flowers.)*

After the fact

- Send a note within the month to say "just thinking of you." Use quotes that are comforting

or send photos of the deceased or of the grieving family members, along with fond memories.

This article was written with information provided by Vermont resident Melanie DeLonge