Situations to consider:

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If the family members are receiving guests, make sure they are not sitting on chairs low to the ground. Undoubtedly they will be hugging people, and if they are sitting low, it will involve reaching up repeatedly.

- Suggest that the grieving family members wear a dark colored shirt; if they are hugging many people, they may end up with some make-up on their shoulders, and it won't show much on black, brown or navy blue.
- If you are a guest who may be hugging or somehow consoling the grieving family members, do not carry a large purse on your shoulder that could potentially slip and knock into them.

If you are a guest:

- If you are a guest in the home of the grieving family members, do NOT start loud conversations about unrelated matters. This can be difficult if there are people present who you have not seen in some time.
- If you are a guest, clean up wherever you can without asking or being asked: washing dishes, putting away food, ushering other guests in and out.
- Offer extra rooms and parking for other guests who may be visiting.
- Inform the grieving family members that you will come back in a day or two to clean bathrooms or change beds as needed. Send your child to shovel the driveway or rake leaves if applicable.
- Offer to answer phone calls or keep track of gifts and cards that arrive.
- Help with *tactfully* spreading the word of the passing so as to avoid awkward encounters with people who do not know.
- Offer to pick up mail, groceries or household necessities whenever you are heading into town.

It is a nice thought but...

Try to avoid just giving your phone number to the grieving family members while saying, "please call me if you need anything." When you're grieving, it is often difficult to know if and when you need anything, and calling someone to ask for it could the last thing you want to do or just be the furthest thing from your mind. Don't wait to be asked, try to think ahead yourself and make a specific offer to help with food, planning, or even child care.

This article was written with information from Vermont resident Melanie DeLonge