

20 Platitudes That Don't Help

And What to Say Instead

Holding
Space 
with Michelle

holdingspacewithmichelle.org

Copyright Page

Holding Space with Michelle

Because there's no right way to grieve — but you don't have to do it alone

This book is intended for general informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for medical or psychological care. If you are worried about hurting yourself or someone else, please seek help right away. In the U.S., you can dial 911, 988, or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting HOME to 741741.

Grief is deeply personal. Everyone experiences it differently. Anticipatory grief doesn't make later grief easier. Caregivers also need care.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations for review purposes.

© 2025 Michelle Tompkins

holdingspacewithmichelle.org

Cover design by: _____

(Add designer name and website, if applicable)

Disclaimer Page

Holding Space with Michelle

Because there's no right way to grieve — but you don't have to do it alone.

This guide is meant to offer support and practical ideas. It is NOT a substitute for medical care, mental health treatment, or crisis services.

If at any point you feel unsafe with your thoughts, or worried you might harm yourself or someone else:

- Call 911 (or your local emergency number)
- Call or text 988 (988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — U.S.)
- Text HOME to 741741 (Crisis Text Line)

20 Platitudes That Don't Help — Intro Note

Welcome, Friend.

These are 20 common platitudes people often say in grief — and what you might say instead if you want to truly support someone who's hurting. No judgment here; most of us have said these things before. The goal isn't perfection, it's connection.

Holding space,
with Michelle

20 Platitudes That Don't Help

“Everything happens for a reason.”

Maybe. But that doesn't mean it had to happen this way. Or that it's your job to be okay with it. Sometimes we find meaning after. Not during. Not right now.

Try saying: “I'm so sorry this happened. I'm here for you.”

“They’re in a better place.”

That may bring comfort to some. But it's okay if you just want them here.

Try saying: “I wish they were still here with you. I know how much you loved them.”

[illegible]

“God never gives you more than you can handle.”

Grief isn't a test. And you don't have to be strong every minute of every day.

Try saying: “This is more than anyone should have to handle. Can I sit with you in it?”

“At least they lived a long life.”

Longevity doesn't erase love or loss. Missing them is still missing them.

Try saying: “I know it doesn’t matter how many years you had. It will never feel like enough.”

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal black ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

“At least they’re not in pain anymore.”

True — but their pain ending doesn't mean yours magically stops.

Try saying: “I know you wish they were here and not hurting. Both can be true.”

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

“Everything will be okay.”

That may not feel true right now. And that's okay.

Try saying: “I don’t have words to make this better. But I won’t disappear on you.”

[illegible]

“Stay strong.”

Crying, falling apart, and resting are also forms of strength.

Try saying: “You don’t have to be strong for me. I’ve got you.”

[illegible]

“Time heals all wounds.”

Time softens edges, but it doesn't erase the love or longing.

Try saying: “Take all the time you need. I’ll still be here.”

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal black ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

“They wouldn’t want you to be sad.”

Grief isn't disrespect. It's love continuing.

Try saying: “It’s okay to be sad. It means they mattered.”

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

No one replaces anyone.

Try saying: “I know nothing will replace them. I’m so sorry.”

[illegible]

Gratitude and grief can co-exist — but one doesn't cancel the other.

Try saying: “It’s okay to miss them and be thankful at the same time.”

[illegible]

“It’s God’s plan.”

That might comfort you. It might not. Either way, it still hurts.

Try saying: “I can’t explain this. I just want you to know I care.”

[illegible]

“They’re always with you.”

Sometimes that feels comforting. Sometimes it feels hollow.

Try saying: “I hope you feel them near when you need to.”

[illegible]

“You’ll feel better soon.”

There's no timeline for grief — and rushing doesn't help.

Try saying: “However long it takes, I’m here.”

[illegible]

There's no easy version of losing someone you love.

Try saying: “I wish none of this had to happen at all.”

[illegible]

“They’re watching over you now.”

That might be comforting, but it doesn’t replace a hug.

Try saying: “I know you’d rather have them here.”

Try saying: “It’s okay to take care of yourself too.”

“Everything happens for a reason.” (Yes, again.)

Because people keep saying it — and it still hurts.

Try saying: “I’m so sorry this happened.”

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

“This too shall pass.”

Some grief changes, but love never passes.

Try saying: “I know it may always ache. I’ll stay with you in it.”

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

“They’re in a better place.” (And again.)

Because some people never stop saying it.

Try saying: “I know you wish they were still here.”

[illegible]

Want more support?

Find more grief resources, journals, and card collections at
holdingspacewithmichelle.org

Available now:

- Grief Journals — Complicated Relationships, Caregiver, and Lost/Stuck
- Grief Card Decks — Quiet Kindness, Whimsy, Complicated Loss, Narcissist, Caregiver, Soft Ache, and more
- Free Guides — 20 Platitudes That Don't Help (and What to Say Instead)

Upcoming releases:

- Holding Space book series (6 titles)
- 365-day grief activity guides and reflection workbooks
- Celebration of Life planning tools