A woman with long, dark hair is shown from the back, covering her face with her hand. The background is a solid teal color. The image is split into three horizontal sections: the top teal section with the woman's head and hand, a middle orange section with white text, and a bottom orange section with white text.

a practical  
guide to  
dealing with  
**TRAUMA**

the dos and don'ts for friends  
and family of those suffering  
through pain, loss or trauma

# things to do:

- Bring food - frozen meals are great!
- Offer specific help that the person can easily accept or turn down. For example, you can ask: Can I look after your child or tend your garden while you sleep?
- Bring useful supplies such as nappies for a child or magazines and snacks for visiting family or for the patient.
- Bring refreshments, such as tea and coffee, an ear to listen and a shoulder to cry on.
- Offer to take them away from their environment to help clear their minds.
- Offer accommodation for people who are not local.

# things to avoid:

- Don't be offended if they refuse your offer of help or support. It can be draining to explain to outsiders why you don't need them to do your laundry.
- Don't ask lots of or intrusive questions. Information will come up in conversation if you are patient.
- If you offer help, follow through with it. It is better to not offer help than to fail to do what you have offered.

## things to say:

- I'm thinking of you during this time.
- Can I pray/light a candle for you on behalf of my religion?
- When you are offering help, be specific, especially if you know them well. For example, if you know they hate doing laundry then offer to do it for them.
- Ask if they would like to talk about something besides their current situation. Sometimes it's nice to take a break!

## things not to say:

- Avoid likening their situation to your personal experiences. Yes, your niece's cousin had an elbow replacement but it's not the same as their open-heart surgery!
- Avoid framing their experience from your perspective - rather find out what they are feeling.
- 'How are you doing?' It's hard to keep explaining that, "I'm OK, because I can't afford to crawl up into a ball and dissolve."
- Avoid giving unsolicited advice. Ask permission first and then, if they agree, keep it short and useful.
- Avoid mentioning your religious or spiritual beliefs unless they ask. Faith is great, but people are not always receptive to this, and it can make them feel worse. You may also have conflicting beliefs.

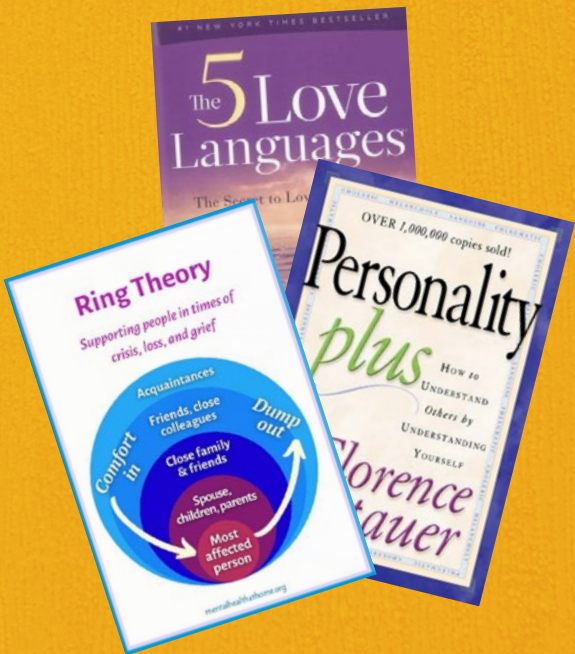
# how to deal with your trauma

- Be patient and kind with people. They usually have good intentions, even if they are ill-informed.
- Be honest with someone if you are uncomfortable/tired/irritated and don't want to discuss a certain topic, such as your trauma.
- Try to find one person you can lean on for comfort and support, such as a friend you can complain to or a partner who understands that you just need to vent for a few minutes.
- Realise that people are human too. Vent for a few minutes and then give them a chance to weigh in.
- If you have a partner who is going through trauma alongside you, then remember that you are a team and can get through it if you are kind and supportive of each other.
- DEFINITELY find a good therapist or counsellor who can be a neutral third party for you to bounce thoughts, feelings and emotions off of. No, your partner/mom/friend doesn't count unless they are trained professionals!
- If you are a couple, go to counselling together.
- Accept help when it is offered. Accepting help from others is a gift to them. They feel better because they want to help and you will get much needed support.

- Don't be afraid to ask for help. Some people might say no, but many will say yes.
- Look after yourself first. You cannot help anyone if you are depleted.
- Don't be ashamed of your emotions. If you need to sit in a coffee shop and cry, then do that. Nobody has the right to stop you feeling your emotions.

## what to read:

- Ring Theory by Susan Silk
- Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman
- Personality Plus by Florence Littauer



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