

Finding the Right Words

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Less Helpful	More Helpful
“Be Strong”	
“God doesn’t give you any more than you can handle.”	“It sounds like this is really hard”
“What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger”	“How are you doing with all this?”
“You need to be strong like your mother.”	“I’m so glad you showed up here today.”
“You need to be strong for your mother (or for your children, family, coworkers, etc.)	“I’m here, if you want to talk now.”
“Be strong, and you’ll get through it.”	“I can only imagine how you’ve coped.”
“Be Faithful”	
“Keep the faith.”	“I’m thinking of you every day.”
“This was part of God’s plan.”	“What has helped you get through the past few days?”
“This was God’s will.”	“I hope things get easier for you.”
“God works in mysterious ways.”	“I can offer help, if you like.”
“God tests our faith.”	“It sounds hard, getting through these days.”
“You need to pray more.”	“I’ll be sending you my thoughts and prayers.”
“Be Positive”	
“Something good will come out of this.”	“It sounds like it’s impossible to see what’s ahead.”
“It happened for the best.”	“I’m so sorry this has happened.”
“You are lucky that your father died peacefully.”	“I was so sad to hear the news about your father.”
“Be grateful it wasn’t worse.”	“You’ve had to deal with a lot all at once.”
“You shouldn’t be so angry.”	“It isn’t fair, is it?”
“You’re going to be just fine.”	“I believe in you.”
“Keep a positive attitude – it’s better for your health.”	“It’s amazing to see you smile with all you are coping with.”
Asking “Why?”	
“Why didn’t you leave sooner?” (Your bad job, your abusive spouse, the approaching hurricane)	“Sounds like you were going through hell.”
“Why didn’t your sister call you sooner?”	“I’m sorry to hear no one called you in time.”
“Why didn’t you stop smoking when you found out about the blood clot?”	“It can be so hard to quit old habits.”
“Why do you think God is putting you through this?”	“What you just told me sounds outrageous.”

“Some Have It Harder”	
“Just think of what the Hurricane Katrina survivors have been through.”	
“You should feel lucky. What you are going through is nothing like what my mother’s generation went through.”	“I’m so sorry you’re going through this.”
“Your problem is not as bad as what my son is going through with cancer.”	“I am so sorry this has happened to you.”
“Get Over It”	
“It’s time to put this behind you.”	
“You need to keep busy, and get back to work.”	“I believe you’ll know the right time to return to work.”
“You have your whole life ahead of you.”	“Allow some time for this.”
“Just think how you’ll be doing by this time next year.”	“Take all the time you need for yourself.”
“I Understand”	
“I understand how you feel.”	
“I know what that’s like.”	“Do you mind telling me what it’s like?”
“I went through a tough time like that, too.”	Tell me more, if you like.”