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# Web Exclusive: How Are You DOING?

BY ERIK NESS

It was a simple and fair question, but to get it to sound right I'd have to add a bunch of emoticons: At least three sad faces, a crying face, and more exclamation points than question marks. And while it was incredibly earnest in intent, it drove me completely nuts in the months following my wife's death. I could talk to most people most of the time, but I would flee from this woman who wanted to know "How are you *doing*?"

Laura Andersen, LCSW, a grief counselor at Midwest Palliative & Hospice CareCenter, finally explained my flight reaction: "Having to reassure other people you're OK? That's exhausting."

Hopefully people around you will be sensitive, but there will always be someone who doesn't know what to say. Like this:

The spiritually insensitive:

"This was God's will."

"God needed another rosebud for His garden."

"They're in a better place."

The just plain insensitive:

"You're young, you'll find someone."

"Thank goodness you have other children."

"You need to get on with your life."

"But I thought you said you were doing OK?"

Pithy advice-columnist insensitive:

"Life is for the living."

"Don't cry/be sad/be afraid."

"I know just how you feel."

"Time will heal."

A final note: Even people you wouldn't expect it of will say the wrong thing. "So many people don't have any experiential knowledge of what you're going through," explains Anderson. And in our culture, death makes many people uneasy. Be forgiving: In the end, I forgot the many uncomfortable efforts to say something, but wonder still about the people who never said a thing.