

## GUIDELINES FOR VISITING A SHIVA HOUSE

1. Consider your visit as a mitzvah, not a burden.
2. Be helpful to the mourners.
3. Allow mourners the opportunity to express grief.
4. Listen!
5. If you don't know what to say – be silent!
6. A shiva visit is not a social occasion.
7. A shiva is not a banquet.

The way to comfort a mourner is with your presence. The good news about this is that you do not need to worry about what to say. The best thing to say is nothing at all unless the mourner indicates that he or she wants to talk. Let them choose the direction for talk.

Things *NOT* to say to a mourner:

- "How are you?" (They're mourning.)
- "I know how you feel." (No, you don't.)
- "He's in a better place / His suffering is over" (The *mourner* is suffering.)

What you can do, if conversation seems appropriate, is to share your memories of the deceased and **most importantly, to listen to what the mourner has to say.** Remember that you do not need to say anything clever! You can just hold their hand, smile and nod. **Remind yourself that the mitzvah is in making sure that they are not alone at this awful time.**

### Ways to help mourners

**During Shivah:** Be there. Listen.

Offer to run errands, cook, deal with practical matters.

Give tzedakah in honor of the dead, arrange for a card to be sent to the mourner.

**After sheloshim:** make sure she is included in social invitations.

Make sure that a mourner does not sit alone at services. Invite him to join you.

Call just to say "Hi."

Drop a note to say hello, or to share a memory of the deceased.

Too often, because we don't know what to do, we withdraw from mourners, leaving them to grieve alone. This is an act of cruelty, even if it is done out of confusion.

Do not abandon a mourner.