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 do 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/turn down
 - For example: can I do some washing or can I tend your garden while you sleep etc.
- Bring hospital/critical supplies
 - For example: nappies for a child, magazines/snacks for family visiting or the Person
- Bring coffee/Tea and an ear/shoulder to listen/lean (or cry) on
- Offer to take them out/away from their environment to help clear the air
- Offer accommodation if people are not local.

things to avoid:

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

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 take their laundry
- Ask if they would like to talk about something besides their current challenge – sometimes it's nice to take a break!

things not to say:

- Avoid likening their challenge to your experience. Yes, your niece's cousin had an elbow replacement – not the same as their open heart surgery.
- Avoid framing their experience into your perspective – find out what they are feeling.
- How are you doing? It is hard to keep explaining that, "Yes, 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 religion or spiritual beliefs – faith is great but often in their darkest times people are not receptive and it can make them feel worse. You may also have conflicting beliefs.

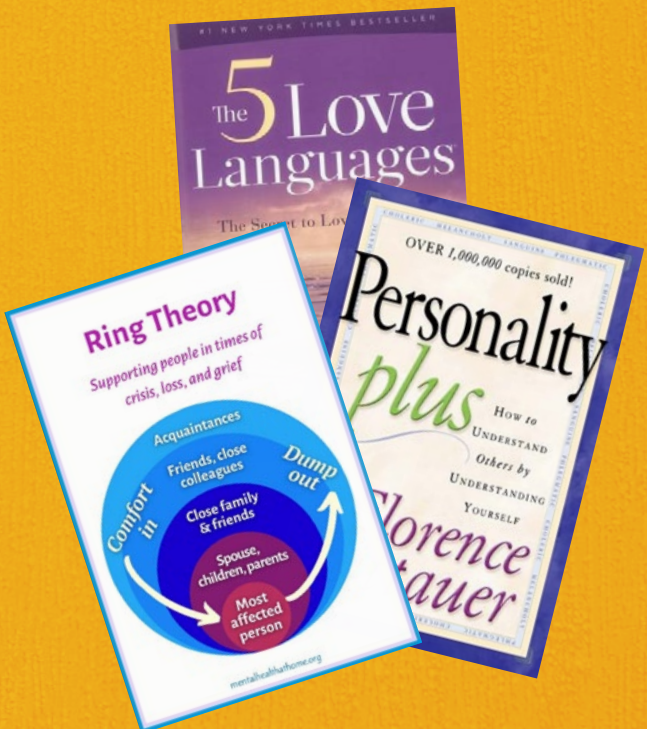
how to deal with your trauma

- Be patient and kind with people – they have good intentions even if they are ill-informed
- Be up front with someone if you are uncomfortable/tired/irritated and don't want to discuss a certain topic (i.e your trauma)
- Try find one person who you can lean into for comfort and support
 - For example: a partner who you can complain to or a husband/wife who knows that you just need to vent for a few minutes.
- Realise that people are human too – vent/dump for a few minutes and then give them a chance to weigh in.
- If you have a partner that 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/counsellor who can be a neutral third party to bounce thoughts, feelings and emotions off of. No, your partner/mom/friend doesn't count unless they are trained professionals.
- Go to counselling together (If you are a couple)
- 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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