

TIPS ON HONORING JEWISH DEAD AND COMFORTING JEWISH MOURNERS

BEFORE DEATH

- Visit the sick to cheer them up. However, once a person has three days to live, only close family and friends should visit so they have time to prepare.
- Do not do anything would hasten death. Do not close the eyes of someone who's about to die.
- During the last few minutes of life, do not leave the room unless you are ill or overcome by emotion.

AFTER DEATH

- The eyes and mouth are closed and a sheet is drawn over the face, preferably by a family member.
- Do not move or touch the body except to preserve dignity (e.g., straighten it out if the person died in an awkward position).
- The body should never be left alone.
- If you feel it's appropriate, ask forgiveness for any harm or disrespect shown during life.
- Cover mirrors with sheets or cloth to show that the image of G-d has been diminished.
- Don't say anything in the presence of the dead that you wouldn't say if they were alive. Do not eat, drink, engage in small talk, joke around, or sing in the room of the deceased. Speak only about the person's good qualities or funeral arrangements.
- At the hospice, anyone, but preferably a person of the same sex, may take care of the body for hygienic purposes or basic presentation.
- Blood-stained sheets and clothing should be handed over for burial.
- For the most part, autopsy is forbidden. Necessary autopsies must be done with a respectful attitude, and organs must be buried with the body.
- Organ donation is permitted and encouraged.

MOURNERS

- At the time of death, offer to call a friend, family member, or rabbi.
- Do not send flowers. Console the mourner by visiting them, bringing them food, and donating to charity in memory of their loved one.
- Be a presence rather than a voice. Let the mourner start the conversation, and let them do most of the talking.
- When leaving a house of mourning, say "may G-d comfort you among those who mourn for Zion and Jerusalem."
- It's appropriate to bring food to a house of mourning. The food should be ready to eat and need no preparation. However, if the person observes the Jewish dietary restrictions and you're not sure how strict they are, feel free to just bring a sympathy card. There's never a food shortage at a house of mourning!