# "How to Say It When You Don't Know What to Say"

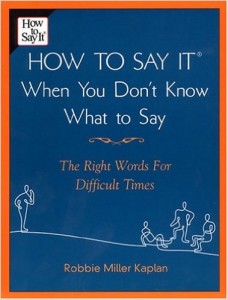
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**"How to Say It When You Don't Know What to Say"** in challenging situations,  in social or business situations, is most difficult since we are not sure how our words will be construed. We may have the best intentions, and we may weigh our words carefully and still have not said what would have helped the individual cope with the challenge they are facing. We will experience insecurity or fear about approaching someone who is in pain. I heard of people who crossed the street as to avoid confronting, actually comforting, an individual who had a loss. Robbie Kaplan, in her book; How To Say It When You Don’t Know What to Say, writes about the loss of her baby and delves into the words people said and the discomforts in accepting those words. She wrote this book to exemplify the nuances with which we need to become acquainted. In her case it was dealing with a death of a child. We also deal with deaths, loss of jobs, disappointments, broken promises etc. It is our responsibility, as coworkers, leaders in the community or work environment, friends, aquaintenances, family members, bosses, coaches, etc to do our best to comfort the one who had the loss of one kind or another. I often write about the need for Leadership Presence: being aware of the situation and the individual with whom we are communicating and having the emotional ability to reach out. Watching for non-verbal clues is a means of communicating as well. **Listening is as important as communicating.** Sometimes, that is all we need to do to let the individual know we are there for them. “*We cannot feel their pain; we* *do not know what they are going through*”. So, saying those words really does not comfort. They could anger the individual since we all experience “life” in different ways. No two losses are felt the same. Here is a list of some things to do and say when you really have a challenge: (from Kaplan's book) To do:

* Being willing to listen without giving advice
* Be a support for that person
* Communicate at a good time
* Listen with no judgment
* Write notes, emails, make telephone calls
* Offer to do specific tasks-don’t ask what you can do: provide an idea.

To say:

* How very sad I was to hear…
* I am thinking of you
* It must be difficult to get through this
* I am here to listen if you want to talk
* Take the time you need

Coaches are listeners. We listen so the client can think about how he/she feels and where he/she would like to go with the conversation. Listening takes energy and intention. I recommend [](http://uniquepathways.websitehabitat.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2016/01/513PH3MBR9L._SX377_BO1204203200_.jpg)  and the references that are made available to give you some guidelines as a boss, leader, community worker, family member, colleague, etc. to know what to say in a challenging situation. When called upon, your actions will be a comfort and allow for healing.

## How to Say it When You Don't Know What to Say

*“There is all the difference in the world between having something to say and having to say something.”-*John Dewey