



THE **Top 20** LIST

compiled for first responders by first responders

wavesofhopeboating.org

First responders are special people with big hearts who bravely endure seeing some of humanity's worst moments.

Kelly Helbig, A Waves of Hope Mom



This information is compiled from “real-life” first responders who faithfully serve every day.

First responders are the first on scene to interact with families facing water tragedies. The ability to provide care, and connect with accurate information and compassionate guidance while handling a high-stress situation is critical. The goal of this document is to provide an inside look and guidance from first responders to first responders to support them as they walk side-by-side with families facing what may be the most difficult day of their life.

First responders have the power to make the on-ramp to this difficult new road smoother.

20 helpful things to say and do

compiled by first responders for first responders



- 1 Slow down and stay calm in high-stress situations.
- 2 Train, train, and train some more for these situations.
- 3 Go beyond training scenarios, and think of the "what ifs."
- 4 Speak gently, considerately and always honestly.
- 5 Tell them you care. Tell them you're with them.
- 6 Answer what you can, families want information.
- 7 Compassion is always the constant, no matter how the family reacts.
- 8 Use the loved one's name when talking to the family.
- 9 Help provide a "private" place for the family to gather and wait if possible.
- 10 Choose one family member to communicate with, not the group.
- 11 Look them in the eye. Be willing to be vulnerable.
- 12 Be human. This moment will stay with them forever.
- 13 Use clear, simple language, not "technical words."
- 14 Answer questions when you can, be honest.
- 15 If you don't know, say, "I don't know, but will do my best to find out."
- 16 Use "care words", not "technical words", with the family.
- 17 Be aware the family or victim may hear you and others when speaking. Be conscientious and considerate.
- 18 Consider visiting the victim at the hospital.
- 19 Consider attending the funeral in uniform as a show of respect.
- 20 Take care of yourself. Our job is hard, but so appreciated.