

Helping the Bereaved: Do's and Don'ts

DO

- Be a good listener
- Let them know they are not alone
- Call and understand they may not be returned
- Bring food to the house over time
- Extend invitations
- Help with children, chores, errands, etc.
- Accept and be sensitive to all moods
- Allow them to talk about their child
- Use the name of the child who died
- Cry if you need to
- Understand there is no timeline for grief
- Share good news with them
- Use touch sensitively

DO SAY

- "I am so sorry"
- "My thoughts are with you and your family"
- "I can't imagine how you are feeling"
- "You're not alone, I am here for you"
- "How are you REALLY doing?"
- "How are you doing today"

DON'T

- Compare your loss with others
- Wait for them to contact you for help
- Tell them what they should do
- Be afraid to talk about the child who died
- Think that age of deceased determines importance of the impact
- Change the subject when they want to talk about their child
- Offer unsolicited advice
- Minimize the death
- Complement them on their strength and bravery
- Ask how they are doing if you aren't willing to listen
- Assume when they laugh they are "over it"
- Avoid those who are grieving because you are uncomfortable
- Worry about reaching out

DON'T SAY

- "It could have been worse"
- "It's really a blessing in disguise"
- "Be brave for your family"
- "Don't cry"
- "This isn't the end of the world"
- "You're doing so well"
- "You'll get over it"
- "Your loved one wouldn't want you to be sad"
- "You'll be okay"
- "Things will be back to normal soon"
- "The first year is always the hardest"
- "It was God's Will"
- "Aren't you over it yet?"
- "Be happy that you even had them in your life"
- "You will have other children"
- "It was meant to be"
- "Time will heal everything"
- "Good thing you are young so you can try again"
- "God only gives us what we can handle"



THE MASSACHUSETTS CENTER

FOR UNEXPECTED INFANT AND CHILD DEATH

Helping Families and Communities Grieve the Death of a Child Under the Age of 3 since 1975