

The MISS Foundation often gets asked "How can I help?" from well intentioned loved ones. They want to know what practical steps they can take to help the bereaved family. Here are some suggestions from the bereaved families themselves:

How Best to Help a Grieving Family

One of the best ways to help a family touched by the death of a child is by offering them long-term, unconditional support. Listen. Provide practical aid such as cooking meals, helping with childcare, and running errands. Don't try to fix them. Express your love. Give them permission to feel their sadness. Remember special days. Be there for them, and don't rush their grief. For more information, visit our website: www.missfoundation.org or our In Mourning Bands Campaign www.inmourningband.org.

"The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing... not healing, not curing... that is a friend who cares." Henri Nouwen

THE DO'S

- Do ask, "How are you REALLY doing?"
- Do remember that you can't take away their pain, but you can share it and help them feel less alone.
- Do let your genuine concern and care show.
- **Do call the child by name.**

- Do treat the couple equally. Fathers need as much support as mothers.
- Do be available...to listen, to run errands, to drive, help with the other children, or whatever else seems needed at the time.
- Do say you are sorry about what happened to their child and about their pain.
- Do accept their moods whatever they may be, you are not there to judge. Be sensitive to shifting moods.
- Do allow them to talk about the child that has died as much and as often as they want.
- Do talk about the special, endearing qualities of the child.
- Do give special attention to the child's brother and sister--at the funeral and in the months to come (they too are hurt and confused and in need of attention which their parents may not be able to give).
- Do reassure the parents that they did everything they could, that the care the child received was the best possible.
- Do put on your calendar the birth and death date of the child and remember the family the following year(s). That you remember the child is very supportive.
- Do extend invitations to them, but understand if they decline or change their minds at the last minute.

- **Above all continue to call and visit!**
- Do send a personal note or letter or make a contribution to a charity that is meaningful to the family.
- Do get literature about the disease and grief process to help you understand.

THE DON'T'S

- Don't be afraid to ask about the deceased child and to share memories.
- Don't simply ask "What can I do", just do it! Often everyday tasks become overwhelming, such as grocery shopping or doing the dishes, just pitch in and do it.
- Don't think that the age of the child determines his/her value and impact.
- Don't be afraid to offer a hug or a neutral touch, it can often be more comforting than words.
- Don't avoid them because you feel helpless or uncomfortable, or don't know what to say.
- Don't change the subject when they mention their child.
- **Don't push the parents through the grieving process, it takes a long time to heal and they never forget.**

- Don't encourage the use of drugs or alcohol.
- Don't ask them how they feel if you aren't willing to listen.
- Don't say you know how they feel.
- Don't tell them what they should feel or do.
- Don't try to find something positive in the child's death.
- Don't point out that at least they have their other children (If they do).
- Don't say that they can always have another child.
- Don't suggest that they should be grateful for their other children.
- Don't think that death puts a ban on laughter. There is much enjoyment in the memory of the time they had together.

"At least he/she wasn't older."

"You must be strong for the other children."

"You're doing so well."

"You're young, you'll get over it."

"Time will heal."

"Everything happens for a reason."

Avoid the following clichés:

"Be brave, don't cry."

"It was God's will" or "it was a blessing."

"Get on with your life. This isn't the end of the world."

"God needed another flower in his garden."



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How can I help?

The Do's and Don'ts of Grief Support



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F O U N D A T I O N

623-979-1000
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Because even in death, they still matter...