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## **For Immediate Release**

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# ***Friends Can Help Bereaved Families at Holidays***

When a child has died and the holidays have arrived, friends and relatives can be a lifeline to those who have to go through this normally festive time of year without their child.

“Friends and family need to understand that the holidays will be different this year for a grieving family,” says Patricia Loder, executive director of The Compassionate Friends. “How friends and families react can make a difference in how well the bereaved family is able to survive the holidays.”

The Compassionate Friends is a non-profit self-help bereavement organization with chapters in all 50 states, providing support for bereaved families following the death of a child.

“What we do at chapter meetings is a good starting point for those wishing to help bereaved parents and siblings...that is talk,” says Mrs. Loder. “Acknowledging this is a difficult time of year can open the conversation with a bereaved parent.”

“Those of us who have lost children want to know that our child is not forgotten. Parents want to hear their child’s name spoken. Sharing memories or funny events involving the child who is no longer living can help the bereaved know their child is remembered.”

Friends can help in a number of other ways, suggests Mrs. Loder:

1) Do specific chores for the family, which might be left otherwise undone. Blow the snow from their driveway or offer to help in other specific ways, such as addressing holiday cards.

2) Offer to put up holiday decorations, outside or in. But if the family objects, don’t insist. The bereaved usually have trouble enjoying the festivity of a holiday when their child cannot be with them.

3) Shopping and facing the crowds, holiday music and general festivities is oftentimes impossible for the newly bereaved. A friend may offer to do the holiday shopping.

4) Don’t be afraid to cry with them. Your tears are a tribute to both the child and the parents and can be a healthy release.

“Above all, be there to listen and offer a sympathetic ear,” says Mrs. Loder. “Don’t stay away because you believe the family will want to be left alone. If they do, they will tell you. But most will appreciate that you cared enough to come.”

“And don’t forget there is a reason why siblings are often termed ‘the forgotten mourners.’ They are hurt, confused, and often ignored. While they may not openly express themselves, this seldom means they are not feeling pain just like their parents.”

For more assistance, call The Compassionate Friends toll-free at 877-969-0010 or visit The Compassionate Friends national Web site at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org).