



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Help for the Holidays

Suggestions How Family and Friends Can Offer Support During The Holidays!

The holidays are upon us! For many, the holidays are a happy time of the year when families and friends congregate and celebrate. But when a child, sibling, or grandchild has died, the bereaved usually find their energy levels have fallen and the holidays a time to be dreaded. Friends and family are concerned and want to be helpful, but usually are uncertain how. Too often they are afraid they will say or do the wrong thing, so they do nothing, which can make them appear uncaring. Following is a list of ideas how you can provide support to a grieving family during the holidays (and remember that grief doesn't last just one holiday season). Open your heart and be a Compassionate Friend this holiday season!

- Recognize the holidays have changed for them—don't pretend they haven't.
- Offer to do the holiday shopping/gift wrapping.
- Offer to address holiday cards.
- Coordinate holiday activities with surviving siblings (don't let them be forgotten during this important time of the year).
- Invite the family for dinner instead of expecting them to host.
- Be open to the idea that the family may want to end old traditions that have suddenly become painful for them. Suggest new traditions that incorporate the child who died.
- Respect the family's privacy—don't press for a commitment just to get them involved and out of the house.
- Offer support and patience.
- Give space to grieve, but don't feel responsible to get someone through their grief.
- Express feelings for the grieving person by acknowledging that they are hurting. Give encouragement that they *will* get through this. Don't try to hurry the process.
- Send a card or note supporting the individual. Recognize and acknowledge that some days are good, some are not so good.
- Reminisce—the number one fear of bereaved parents is that their child will be forgotten. Give them the opportunity to talk about their child and join them in sharing remembrances of better times.
- Above all, don't avoid grieving parents, siblings, and grandparents—it's not contagious!