



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**

National Office
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

For Immediate Release

December 5, 2003

FROM: Wayne Loder
Public Awareness Coordinator
The Compassionate Friends
(Toll free) 866-964-4000
E-mail: wayneloder@aol.com

Ten Ways to Help Grieving Families Survive the Holidays After the Death of a Child

Families that have suffered the death of a child often find the holidays one of the most stressful times during the year.

According to The Compassionate Friends, the world's largest self-help bereavement organization assisting families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age, from any cause, there are many ways relatives and friends can help those mourning the death of a child. Here are ten ways others can help during the holidays, according to Pat Loder, Executive Director of The Compassionate Friends.

- 1) Do specific chores for the family. Clean the snow from their driveway or offer to help in other specific ways, such as addressing holiday cards.
- 2) Offer to help with holiday shopping or other errands, as facing crowds and the blare of holiday music is often difficult for the bereaved.
- 3) Figure ways to incorporate a remembrance of the child during the season. Make an ornament you can give the family that reminds you of that child. Collect written memories of the child from friends and relatives and place them in a scrapbook to give as a present.
- 4) Offer to put up holiday decorations, inside or out. But don't insist if the family objects.
- 5) Don't forget the siblings. There is a good reason why they are often termed "the forgotten mourners." Ask them how they're doing—and listen and respond to their answer.
- 6) Give a gift to your favorite charity or that of the family in memory of their child.
- 7) Light a memorial candle and tell the family you're burning it in memory of their child.
- 8) Be willing to spend time just listening and don't be afraid to cry with the family. Your tears are a tribute to both the child and the parents and can be a healthy release.
- 9) Accompany the family to a memorial service such as those held in observance of the Worldwide Candle Lighting by The Compassionate Friends the second Sunday in December.
- 10) New Years parties may seem like fun, but grieving families probably won't be in a festive mood. Old traditions may have to go by the wayside.

"Nothing is more important than being available to lend a sympathetic ear," said 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."

The Compassionate Friends has nearly 600 chapters in the United States, offering support and friendship through shared grief. The organization has a presence in an estimated 29 countries around the world. For more information, call The Compassionate Friends toll-free at 877-969-0010 or visit The Compassionate Friends national Web site at www.compassionatefriends.org.