



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



In Partnership with **FUNERAL SERVICE
FOUNDATION**
-Est. 1967-

WHAT BEREAVED PARENTS WANT YOU TO KNOW



The death of a child is an enduring loss that has a lasting impact on the life of parents. The depth of grief and pain experienced by parents after the death of a child cannot be fully understood if you have not lived that experience yourself. However, there are things that are important for those caring for bereaved parents to know in order to reflect compassion and empathy. Here are a few things that Bereaved Parents want you to know about their grief and loss.

GRIEF IS ENDURING

The grief of a bereaved parent will last the rest of their lives. There is no timetable for how long grief will last. The love a parent feels for their child did not die when their child died. Just as love is enduring, so, too, is grief. Bereaved parents do not need unsolicited advice or for others to “fix them.” Grieving the death of a child is a lifelong journey with many ebbs and flows. Avoid judgment or advising people to “move on” or to “let go of their pain.” This only dismisses the genuine experience of grief and grief’s presence in their life. Be gentle with bereaved parents wherever they may be in their journey with grief, they are doing the best they can.

THE DEATH OF OUR CHILD(REN) CHANGED US

Don’t expect bereaved parents to be the same as they were before. The death of a child forever changes a parent. Through this experience of loss, bereaved parents now see life from a different point of view. Many of the thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors a parent had before their child died are now different. Be patient as bereaved parents find their footing and learn to live as a changed person. Avoid trying to lead a person back to who they were before the death. Instead, embrace the person they are now, their insight, wisdom, and grief are all an important part of the person they have become.



ASK ABOUT OUR CHILD AND SAY THEIR NAME

Bereaved parents love to tell stories and share memories of their child. Asking about their child or saying their name will not “remind a parent of their grief.” Bereaved parents are thinking about their child all the time. When referring to a person’s child who died, use the child’s name when you can do so. One parent recalled that when they first met the funeral director caring for their child, the funeral director first asked if she could tell him about her child. This was comforting, appreciated, and gave her an opportunity to talk about her child.

ACTIONS GO MUCH FURTHER THAN WORDS

Avoid using platitudes like, “They are in a better place,” “You can always have more children,” “Everything happens for a reason,” or “I can’t imagine how you are doing this.” Bereaved parents want their children here with them, their children are not replaceable, and many of them struggle with how they are making it each day as well. Rather than words that are often not helpful, instead commit to be there for them and show up when you are needed most. Give hugs, walk alongside, and be there.



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