

HOW NON BEREAVED CAN HELP

By: Pat Moser
Bereaved Mother
Ocala, FL

Dear Friends, Co-workers, Church Family, extended family and “General Public,”

Our precious child has died. The funeral is over. The many people who filled our life's during the first week after our child died doing so many things to help us have all gone back to their normal life. We as bereaved parents are left with indescribable pain and grief, in a huge black hole not knowing where to turn or what to do and wondering how we can possibly survive our child's death. Often times others want to help bereaved parents but really have no idea how to go about doing this. Below is a list of ways that you can help a friend or acquaintance whose child has died.

- Know that you do not have to have the “right words” to say to us, there are no right words. Just your presence in our life, a hug or a simple, “I am so sorry” is good.
- Please call us, visit us or send cards to us often. Knowing someone else remembers and cares helps so much.
- Know that the death of our beloved child is not something that we “will or can get over” and we can not just “put this behind us and move on.” The grief process is a long and very difficult one after the death of a child.
- Remember even if we appear to be “doing well” in the early days, weeks, months and even years after our child has died we are not. We will put on a “good face” and say we are OK but we are not.
- Please do not be afraid to talk to us about our child who has died. Even though it may bring tears to us we love to hear our child's name and to hear of your memories of them not just at the funeral but always.
- Know that we need you and your support and understanding for a long time, and not just in the few days following our child's death.
- Know that our “grief work” is hard work and we have very little energy for anything else.

- Help us with our surviving children. We are so consumed in our grief for our child who has died our other children often become the” forgotten grievers.” Another adult that can offer support and understanding to them at this time is a great way to help us.
- Don’t avoid us or worry about making us cry by talking with us. Our tears are always very close to the surface and tears are also healing. Cry with us if you feel like it.
- Don’t assume that we will “call you if we need anything” as people say to us as they leave the funeral. More than likely we will not make that call, but that does not mean that we “don’t need anything,” it simply means we simply can’t make that call for help.
- Invite us to do “social things” like go out for lunch, go to a movie, go for a walk, sit and talk but know that we may very well decline you many times. Don’t give up on us, ask us again and again. Eventually, we will find the desire or strength to take you up on your offer.
- Know that our ability to concentrate on anything is very difficult.
- Don’t avoid us or run from us when you see us at the grocery store, church or when we return to our jobs. We don’t have anything that you can “catch” we have a broken heart and can certainly use your support.
- Please do not tell us what we “should” or “should not” be doing. We have to find our own way on this journey of grief. What works for one person will not work for another.
- Do not tell us you know just how we feel. If you have not had a child die there is NO possible way that you can even begin to imagine our pain.
- Encourage any bereaved parent that you know to find a support group for parents who have had a child die or better yet look into finding one for them yourself and let them know about it.
- Know that one day we will come out of the darkness of our grief and we will be eternally grateful to you for helping us to find our way.