

WHAT SHOULD I SAY...

Adapted from suggestions by The Compassionate Friends Network

DO'S

DO remember that you can't take away their pain, but you can share it and help them feel less alone.

DO let your genuine concern and care show.

DO treat the parents equally. Fathers need as much support as mothers.

DO be available...to listen, to run errands, to drive, help with the other children, or whatever else seems needed at the time.

DO say you are sorry about what happened to their child and about their pain.

DO accept their moods whatever they may be, you are not there to judge. Be sensitive to shifting moods.

DO allow talk about the special, endearing qualities of the child that died.

DO give special attention to surviving siblings-at the funeral and in the months to come (they too are hurt and confused and in need of attention which their parents may not be able to give).

DO reassure the parents that they did everything they could, that the care the child received was the best possible.

DO put on your calendar the birth and death of the child and remember the family the following year(s).

DO extend invitations to the family. But understanding if they decline or change their minds at the last minute. Above all continue to call and visit.

DO send a personal note or letter or make a contribution to a charity that is meaningful to the family.

DO get literature about the condition and grief process to help you understand.

DON'TS

DON'T think that the age of the child determines how painful his loss is to his family.

DON'T be afraid to offer a hug, it can often be more comforting than words.

DON'T avoid the family because you feel helpless, uncomfortable, or don't know what to say.

DON'T change the subject when someone mentions the child that died.

DON'T push the parents through the grieving process, it takes a long time to heal and everyone heals at their own pace.

DON'T encourage the use of drugs or alcohol.

DON'T tell a grieving family what they should feel or do.

DON'T try to find something positive in the child's death.

DON'T point out to grieving parents that they at least have their other children.

DON'T say that they can always have another child.

DON'T suggest that they should be grateful for the time they had together.

DON'T tell parents you know how they should feel, even if you also lost a child.

DON'T think that death puts a ban on laughter. There can be much enjoyment in memories.

DON'T forget to "find the time" to call and keep in touch, especially on holidays and anniversaries.

DON'T use clichés and sayings that are often used to try to make sense of this tragedy. These statements often hurt more than help. A simple hug or an honest "I don't know what to say" is often the best way to show you care.