

## How you can help.

Some do's and don'ts.

**Don't** be afraid to visit bereaved parents for fear you might make things worse. As a friend said, "You can't make it any worse. The worst has already happened."

**Don't** be afraid to mention the child's name, whether in the early days or not. Parents want to hear it – again and again and again.

**Don't** say, "I know how you feel." You don't.

**Don't** try to jolly the grieving person along or try to persuade them to do something they are reluctant to do. The best advice I was given was, "Don't let anyone tell you how you should be."

**Don't** feel you have to say anything. It is better to be honest and admit you don't know what to say. A hug and a listening ear are preferable to uttering clichés.

**Don't** wait to be asked for help. The last thing a grieving parent can do is pick up the phone and ask for help. Yet they need help with almost everything.

**Don't** assume that because we are keeping ourselves to ourselves and appear to be coping, we don't need your help. And don't ask how we are unless you really want to know.

**Don't** quote the Bible at us or tell us our child is in a better place. All we want is our child here with us.

**Don't** expect us to, "get over it" or tell us life goes on. We will never get over it. We will find a way to survive but our lives are changed forever. And don't tell us how strong we are, we aren't and it is like telling us to keep our pain to ourselves. Just getting out of bed and dressing in the morning is an effort.

**Don't** tell us how well we look – we haven't been ill.

**Don't** be judgemental. You can't begin to imagine our pain, so please be patient and don't have false expectations of us.

**Don't** say, "You don't know unless you try". Often we do know and we don't want to try.

**Do** take something round to eat. I couldn't even make a cup of tea. A casserole is always welcome.

**Do** offer practical help. Our lives have been torn apart and it can be almost impossible to carry out the most simple routine tasks.

**Do** be patient, You may well have to hear the same account of what happened over and over again. It is vital for the grieving parent to do this. Please let them.

**Do** be sensitive and aware how important it is for parents to know that their child is not being forgotten. Do remember to mention the child's name if you send Christmas cards and if you can remember to acknowledge the child's anniversary every year, that will bring much comfort to the parents.

**Do** be aware that we are not the same people we were before our child died. Do make allowances for the fact that our experience has changed our lives **forever**.

**Do** think before you say anything. We are super sensitive and careless words can hurt us deeply.

**Do** let us cry. Tears are healing and it is even more comforting to have someone weep with us, share our pain.

Finally, **do** keep in touch. Keep phoning, especially as the weeks turn into month and years. Your lives move on, ours don't.