

## 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.