

helping yourself TO MOVE FORWARD

No one can take away the pain you feel after your child dies. Grief is a personal journey that can be painful, overwhelming and sometimes very lonely. Although it may not feel like it now, there are positive steps you can take to help yourself cope. Below are some suggestions to help you move forward in your grief.

DON'T RUN AWAY FROM YOUR FEELINGS.

The death of your child affects your mind, body and spirit. You may feel dazed or numb; you may feel many different emotions, sometimes all at the same time. This is a normal part of your grief. Allow yourself to mourn; cry when you need to. There are no rules for the "right way" to grieve or a timeline for how long your grief should last. Consider taking things "one day at a time" and grieving at your own pace.

SPEND TIME WITH THOSE WHO BRING YOU COMFORT.

It can be difficult to reach out to others when you are hurting. Find someone with whom you feel comfortable spending time and talking; someone who can listen to how you feel without making any judgments. It may be a family member, a close friend or a member of the clergy. Surround yourself with those who will provide you with comfort, patience and understanding.

TELL PEOPLE WHAT YOU NEED.

Often, others who want to help simply don't know what to do. Tell them what is helpful to you and what is not. Don't worry about having to say the right thing, just speak from your heart. You have every right to do what you feel is best for you in order to fulfill your needs.

FIND WAYS TO HELP YOURSELF RELIEVE STRESS.

Your feelings of loss and sadness are not only emotionally difficult, but can also cause physical stress on your body. Fatigue or sleeplessness, anxiety, and physical illness are common. Rest and eat balanced meals. Nurture yourself and try to do things you enjoy. Taking care of yourself doesn't mean you are feeling sorry for yourself or have forgotten your child; it means that you are caring for yourself during the grieving and recovery process.

IT'S A LONG PROCESS.

For some families, working through grief may be a long process. Along the way, set small, realistic goals, moment by moment and day by day. Be patient with yourself; your journey with grief will take time. Moving forward doesn't mean that you will forget your child or "move on." The grieving and coping process will help you find peace.

WAIT BEFORE MAKING MAJOR DECISIONS.

This is not the time to make any major life decisions such as those concerning relationships, jobs or where you live. Wait until the shock and numbness begin to subside. Some professionals have encouraged families to delay making major life decisions for up to two years after the death of a child.