

HOW *friends and family* CAN HELP

Family members and friends may have difficulty understanding the intensity of a bereaved parent's grief, leaving you with feelings of loneliness. Even though they too are grieving the loss of your child, their reactions to your grief may be varied because yours is so much greater than theirs. You may find that some people feel awkward and uneasy around you; they don't know what to do or say, or worry they may say or do the wrong thing. As a result, some friends and family may keep themselves at a physical or emotional distance; in some cases, they may need your permission to express their own emotions. Alternatively, you may be overwhelmed with support from friends and family during your first days at home, followed by little support afterward. Because your grief is so different from the grief of other friends and family, they may think there is nothing they can do to help. They may not know how to help you, as much as they want to.

IT'S OKAY TO ASK FOR HELP.

Let your friends and family know what you need physically, emotionally, and spiritually. By letting your family and friends help you with even the most simple tasks, they are able to show their love for you and your child, especially at a time when they may have trouble finding the right words to express their sadness for your loss.

HERE ARE A FEW THINGS YOU CAN ASK FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO DO:

- Run errands
- Offer to drive someone home
- Prepare food
- Do laundry
- Help with housekeeping or yard work
- Take care of other children
- Sit and listen
- Drive a car pool
- Tell you about their memories of your child
- Care for your pets

At this time, you may feel that you need to take care of others as they share in your grief. When you have visitors to your home you may feel forced into playing the role of the host. Don't feel that you need to be strong for those friends and family who come to you offering support. They are coming because they want to support you.

CONTINUING TO ASK FOR HELP.

Friends and family may think that your grieving process will be brief, believing that your grief for your child should be temporary. As time moves on, you may feel that you no longer have the support you would like from friends and family. You may feel that you and your child have been forgotten. Friends and family, however, want to offer you their support and may not know you need it. While it is not your job to comfort others or ask for support, it can be healing to involve people you trust in your grief. Let them know what you are feeling and what your needs are. Months or even years after your child's passing, it's still okay to ask for help. Your feelings are valid and grief can be unpredictable in nature. Be accepting of your own feelings and don't hesitate to ask friends and family to help you.