



**THE MASSACHUSETTS CENTER**  
 FOR UNEXPECTED INFANT AND CHILD DEATH  
*Helping Families and Communities Grieve the Death of a Child Under the Age of 3 since 1975*

## Helping the Bereaved – Do’s & Don’ts

<b>DO...</b>	<b>DON’T...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a good listener; offer silent support as needed</li> <li>• Remember that you can’t take away the pain, but you can let them know that they are not alone</li> <li>• Continue to call and understand that calls may not be returned right away, if at all</li> <li>• Bring food to the house and continue for several weeks or months</li> <li>• Extend invitations, understanding that they might change their minds at the last minute</li> <li>• Help with children, errands, phone calls, etc.</li> <li>• Accept and be sensitive to all moods</li> <li>• Allow them to talk about their child as much and as often as they need to</li> <li>• Use the name of the child who died</li> <li>• Cry if you feel like crying</li> <li>• Understand that there is no timeline or stages of grief</li> <li>• Share good news with them – they can still be happy for others</li> <li>• Use touch sensitively (hugs, hand-holding, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare your loss with theirs</li> <li>• Wait for them to contact you for help, just help</li> <li>• Tell them what they should do</li> <li>• Be afraid to talk about the child who died and share memories</li> <li>• Think that the age of the deceased determines the importance or the impact</li> <li>• Change the subject when they want to talk about their child</li> <li>• Offer unsolicited advice</li> <li>• Minimize the death</li> <li>• Complement them on their strength or bravery</li> <li>• Ask how they are doing if you aren’t willing to listen</li> <li>• Assume when they laugh that they are “over it”</li> <li>• Avoid those who are grieving because you are uncomfortable</li> <li>• Worry about reaching out if you have not done so already</li> </ul>
<b>DO SAY...</b>	<b>DON’T SAY...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I am so sorry”</li> <li>• “My thoughts are with you and your family.”</li> <li>• “I can’t imagine how you are feeling.”</li> <li>• “You’re not alone, I am here for you.”</li> <li>• “How are you REALLY doing?” and listen to the answer</li> <li>• “How are you doing today?”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “It could have been worse”</li> <li>• “It’s really a blessing in disguise”</li> <li>• “Be brave for your family”</li> <li>• “Don’t cry”</li> <li>• “This isn’t the end of the world”</li> <li>• “You’re doing so well”</li> <li>• “You’ll get over it”</li> <li>• “Your loved one wouldn’t want you to be sad”</li> <li>• “You’ll be okay”</li> <li>• “Things will be back to normal soon”</li> <li>• “The first year is always the hardest”</li> <li>• “It was God’s Will”</li> <li>• “Aren’t you over it yet?”</li> <li>• “Be happy that you even had them in your life”</li> <li>• “You will have other children”</li> <li>• “It was meant to be”</li> <li>• “Time will heal everything”</li> <li>• “Good thing you are young so you can try again.”</li> <li>• “God only gives us what we can handle.”</li> </ul>

**Adapted from:**

Loss of Loved Ones to Sudden Tragedy (LLOST) – <http://www.llost.org/Resources/DosDonts.php>