



## Ways to Help Grieving Parents & Family Members

The days and weeks following the loss of a child can be a complete and total blur for grieving parents and family members. Family and friends can step in to help with tasks, as the grieving parents feel comfortable. Here are some tasks that may be helpful for those experiencing the grief:

- Choosing a funeral home for the child's final arrangements
- Notifying hospital staff of the funeral home choice
- Notifying family, friends, colleagues, employers, etc. of final arrangements
- Making plans for the final arrangement services, as the parents request assistance
- Answering phones or emails and assisting with condolence visits
- Planning meals for the time ahead
- Arranging pet care for the family pets
- Assisting with thank you cards, as needed

## Grieving Parents & How to Help

Grief is a human response to any loss, whether the loss is real, perceived, threatened or anticipated. Each of us will grieve in our own way. After the death of a loved one, especially a child, parents may experience feelings that are intense and lasting. This will be a time that grieving parents need the love, support, caring and acceptance of others. Here are a few ways that you can help them in the days, weeks and months following the loss:

- Sending a sympathy card or letter letting them know you are thinking of them.
- Calling them – A simple phone call to let them know you care can go a long way.
- Call their child by name – Many feel that saying the child's name can bring about feelings of sadness. This is often incredibly comforting to grieving parents as it shows them that their child has not been forgotten by others.
- Encourage parents to share their feelings and stories about their child/pregnancy.
- Allow parents to have privacy as needed.
- Listen – This can be one of the most important things that you do for grieving parents.
- Cry with them – Many people try to avoid showing emotion for fear of making the parents sadder. Crying with them and showing emotion shows that you care.
- Be practical – Offer to help with daily household chores, running errands, picking up other children from activities, etc.
- Acknowledge that you care – Be authentic and share your true feelings.

Allow parents to grieve in their own personal way while acknowledging their feelings and letting them know they do not have to walk through this journey alone. If you are concerned about a grieving parent in your life, please contact a local mental health professional or the MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital Grief and Bereavement Coordinator.