

What to do when your friend's child dies

The death of a child is, without a doubt, one of the traumatic experiences a family can have.

You may be reading this because someone you know has lost a child or you are interested in finding out how best to help a friend who may lose a child. Just by reading this shows that you are a good and considerate friend, and that is what any Angel parent needs.

The life of an Angel parent will never be the same again, what they experienced as normal before their loss will never be that again. They will have a new normal where their every day feelings and emotions will be their child and their grief journey.

When a child dies, some people don't know what to say or will shy away from the family and some friendships are lost. On the reverse are some suggestions of what to and what not to say.

If you used to meet your friend for a coffee on a Wednesday or have a lunchtime drink on a Sunday then keep doing that. They are still the same person and will value that continued friendship and consistency. They don't need or want to be treated differently, or to expect you to fully understand.

Avoid offering any advice on how they should deal with their loss. There is not a right or wrong way to grieve, they will be trying to find their own way, which will be difficult as it is; without being told something that may be conflicting.

Offer practical support. Your friend will have days when they are feeling down and do not want to go out and face the world. Ask if they need anything doing, some shopping, taking any other children to school, filling a prescription or being taken to an appointment.

Your friend may exhibit bouts of anger, low mood or other emotions that they may not have shown before. Try to tolerate this as it is a grief reaction, but be straight with them about the impact it has on you.

Supporting someone who has lost a child can be emotionally exhausting so ensure you have someone to talk to about how this may have affected you. You are in a better position to support your friends if you have your own support.

Things NOT to say to a grieving parent

- Time heals all wounds
- Let go/move on
- Have Faith
- Everything happens for a reason
- At least
- They are in a better place
- I know how you feel my pet died
- At least you.....
- You are still young, you can have more children
- There is a reason for everything
- Be strong
- God has a plan

Things TO say to a grieving parent

- Please accept My condolences for your loss
- I don't know how you feel, but I am here to help in any way
- I'm just a phone call away
- Say nothing, just be with them
- Give a hug instead of saying something
- You and your loved ones will be in
- My thoughts and prayers
- Do you want to talk ?
- I am here