



Made Known

FRIENDS PAMPHLET

“The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing... not healing, not curing... that is a friend who cares.”

– Henri Nouwen

GRIEF

When someone we love dies, even if we’ve never met that person, it is a loss. And loss often changes people. Your friend, who has lost a child, is grieving and the way it changes them might even change a piece of your friendship.

Because grief unfolds in so many different ways, it can be tricky to know how to support your friend. Your friend may . . .

- . . . cry uncontrollably or not at all (or both).
- . . . speak of nothing other than their child or insist it really hasn’t affected them.
- . . . fixate on memorializing their baby or quickly jump back into their normal routine.
- . . . find every day chores impossible or immediately begin a new business venture.

While all of these are normal and healthy ways of grieving, it might be confusing and frightening for you, as their friend. You might be afraid of saying the wrong thing. But that fear can lead to something even worse: avoidance.

Instead, make every effort to show up more consistently than ever. Watch and listen to discover how your friend is grieving. Look for things they might need that they might not know how to ask for. Is their laundry piling up? Offer to fold a load. Is their fridge stocked? Offer to bring a meal. Are they suddenly obsessed with designing their new Etsy store? Order some products and write a review. Don’t wait to be asked or invited. Just being present will let them know you aren’t afraid to embrace their changing world, and you are with them no matter what.

When they are ready, be willing to talk about the loss. Don’t change the subject. Listen and ask questions when your friend seems ready to share.

If you have stayed silent, not knowing what to say, remember: It is never too late to reach out.

CARING FOR YOUR FRIEND

DON’T SAY:

- » “You can have another baby.” (*Another baby will never replace this baby.*)
- » “You have an angel in Heaven.” (*Parents don’t want an angel. They want their baby.*)
- » “Don’t dwell. Just put it behind you.” (*Grief has no appropriate timetable.*)
- » “There’s a reason for everything.” (*Reason doesn’t make sense of grief.*)

- » “Call me if you need anything.” (*Grieving parents seldom reach out.*)

DO SAY:

- » “I’m sorry.” (*This lets them know you recognize the depth of their loss.*)
- » “This must be hard for you.” (*Acknowledge and validate your friend’s emotions.*)
- » “I don’t know what to say.” (*It’s okay to admit when you are at a loss for words.*)
- » “I’m going to the store, can I pick up some groceries for you?” (*Offer tangible ways you could help. If they say no this time, keep trying.*)
- » Nothing. (*Sometimes your presence is all that is needed. Don’t be afraid of silence.*)

“It seemed like the words I wanted to hear most were the ones everyone was censoring as they searched for the perfect thing to say. My 4-year-old niece brought me the most comfort when she voiced her completely uncensored thoughts about the baby we lost. ‘I wish Celeste could eat hamburgers, too.’ ‘I wish Celeste didn’t die.’ ‘I wonder what Celeste’s favorite color would be.’” – Lauren

DO:

Listen
Ask Questions
Cry with them
Household chores (laundry, dishes, cooking, etc)
Transporting (kids, family, errands)
Take out trash
Entertain older children
Bring meals
Sit in silence
Send Texts
Massage shoulders (grief comes with physical pain)
Hold a hand, touch a shoulder, or give a hug
Rally a network of supportive friends (you will need help!)

Continue supporting your friend’s grief. Don’t worry, you won’t still be doing their yard work for the next ten years. But allow this loss to be part of the story of your friendship. Be willing to talk about their child. It’s part of the healing.

REMEMBERING

For many parents who lose a baby, their biggest fear is being the only one who remembers their baby in the upcoming months and years. One of the greatest gifts you can give your friend is simply committing to remember their child. Here are a few practical ways to show you remember:

- » Attend the memorial service.
- » Call the baby by name.
- » Give a small birthday gift .

- » Create a calendar reminder for significant days. (such as the anniversary of the loss, or the baby's due date)
- » Check in on holidays. (Mother's Day and Father's Day can be particularly difficult)
- » Send a short text whenever their baby comes to mind.
- » Share your memories of the pregnancy, birth and death.

Gift Ideas:

- Remembrance jewelry
- Planter/Flowers in a baby vase
- Original poem
- Painting
- Living tree or plant
- Needlework or unique craft
- Donation to a memorial fund

Suggested Information

<http://www.northsidepnl.com/for-family--friends.html>