



Bereavement Support Services

BEREAVEMENT FOR FRIENDS

Beaumont



GRIEVING PARENT...

ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK

(BUT I HOPE THAT YOU WILL)

Cathy Romeo, Co-Author, *Ended Beginnings*;
Healing Childbearing Losses,
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670 Amherst Road South Hadley, MA 01075



I'VE COME TO HELP YOU CRY **JOANETTA HENDE**

Grief touches us all sooner or later; death is part of life. For those caught up in the pain, there can be no escape. For those standing by, there may be no more helpless feeling than trying to comfort a friend or loved one through an unbearable loss. Fear of saying or doing the wrong thing can result in saying or doing nothing, leaving the bereaved feeling alone and out of step, unable to express their needs or feelings. They may perceive their grief reactions as inappropriate in the eyes of others.

The world of grief is often a secret place, and therefore misunderstood by those who have not personally experienced the pain of overwhelming loss. In our society, death and sorrow are often tucked away behind closed doors. There is a lack of information about the nature of grief, and the complexion that mourning can and must take for a healthy resolution of the loss. For grieving is healing, and in order to fully live again, sorrow must not be denied. I look back with regret to the times in my life when I failed to reach out to those in need simply because I didn't know what to do or say. If I could do it over...

- ... I would go immediately to the home of the newly bereaved family.
- ... I would hug and I would listen with my heart.
- ... I would offer no answers.
- ... I would be quiet support, offering help in any way that might lessen the confusion, no matter how simple.
- ... I would not forget the bereaved as the days and weeks passed.
- ... I would call.
- ... I would stop by from time to time with something good to eat or a small gift, just to say, "I care."
- ... I would offer to help out in small ways to simplify a life filled with confusion.
- ... I would offer help and support with bereaved children, whose grief is often forgotten.
- ... I would speak of the deceased openly, remembering the joy, the life.
- ... I would welcome tears, for tears are healing.
- ... I would listen without judging to voiced guilts, to the anger, to the despair.
- ... I would remember that when a bereaved person needs help the most is when he may be least able to ask for it.
- ... I would not assume that all was well simply because I had not heard otherwise.
- ... I would accept and encourage the expression of grief in its own way, in its own time.
- ... I would open myself to the pain.
- ... I would share the sorrow.

The greatest gift of all is the gift of self... Loving arms and simple words, "I'VE COME TO HELP YOU CRY."

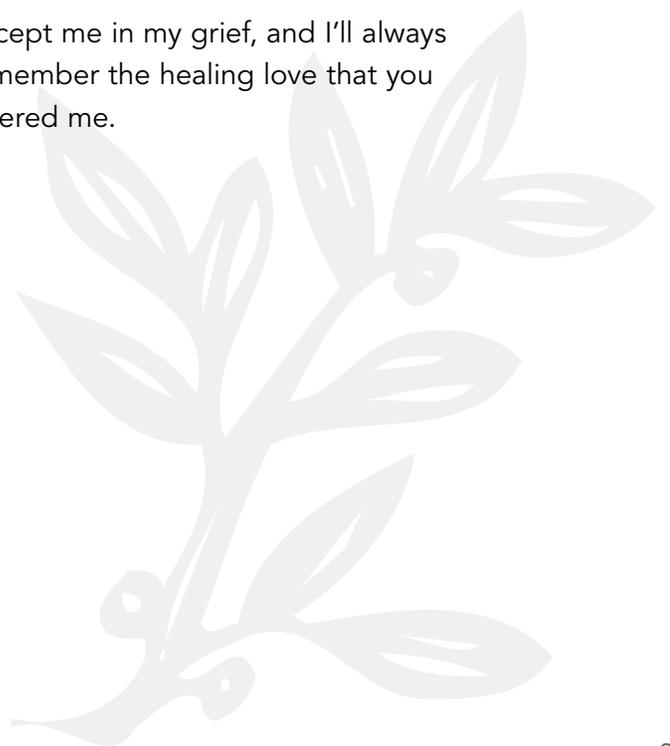
Joanetta's son Alex died in 1984 when he was two and one-half. She is the mother of four remaining children and lives in the Indianapolis area.

She is currently working on her first book which should be ready for publication early in 1988.

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PLEASE...

- Know that I need you, I may not ask for help (I may be much too numb), but I need to know you're there.
- Know that I do not expect you to make me feel better or to take away my pain. Right now no one can. I need your support, your acceptance of my need to grieve, and your willingness to live with the helplessness you'll feel.
- If you haven't called because you cannot handle my grief and your helplessness, say so. I can truly understand that, and I'll feel better than I would have if you used excuses that made me think you didn't care.
- Try to tolerate my anger, if you can. It's not really you or others who anger me; it's that I lost what I loved. I pray you'll forgive my "unreasonable" outbursts. I pray you'll understand.
- Don't try to stop my tears. My tears may be hard on you, but they are a healthy way for me to release some of my pain. Crying is good for me; please try to sit with me and let me cry.
- Don't try to cheer me up by comparing "worse" losses. Pain is pain, and mine must be acknowledged.
- Understand if I can't bear to be with your new baby or attend a baby shower or christening. I do wish you joy, and I even feel gladness for you, but my grief cannot be suppressed.
- Don't tell me that what happened must have been "God's will." Hearing that brings me no consolation right now and only adds to the spiritual confusion and isolation I feel.
- Don't expect that hearing "She is with God," should be all that matters to me. I may cling to that belief too, but I still ache to have her here with me, and I ache to know that she is safe.
- Don't remind me how lucky I am to have other children or that I can try soon to have another. There is not, nor will there be a replacement for this child. Love cannot be discounted or replaced... it simply is.
- Don't say, "It was better this way – better to not have had him longer." I ache for one more hour with him.
- Don't say, "I know how you feel." No one knows that. Please ask instead how I am today, how I feel.
- Offer specific help... a meal, a laundry done, a free hour. I'm too deeply hurt to think very far ahead.
- Don't tell me to put this behind me, forget, and get on with my life. This is my life. I need to grieve. I need to be me, and I need not to forget but to find a way to remember in peace.
- Hold me; touch me; tell me that you care; bear with me through this uncharted territory that is my grief.
- Accept me in my grief, and I'll always remember the healing love that you offered me.





DON'T FORGET THE LOSS OF THE BABY BECAUSE THE PARENTS NEVER WILL.

DO

- Do allow the parents to talk.
 - Do show your sadness and hurt for their loss – say “I’m sorry.”
 - Do ask the parents how they are doing.
 - Do accept their style of grief.
 - Do tell parents that grief is a process and that it takes time to heal. Remind them they should not expect too much of themselves while grieving and need only do what they think they can handle.
 - Do help parents remember special, endearing qualities of their baby.
 - Do assure parents that eventually they will resume life activities with a new sense of what’s normal for them.
 - Do acknowledge the significance of the loss to all family members (e.g. mother, father, sisters, brothers, grandparents, and aunts/uncles).
 - Do offer to cook a meal, clean the house, or do the laundry to lighten the parents’ sense of responsibilities.
 - Do call the baby by the name chosen by the parents.
 - Do remember the parents on the baby’s due date, birth date and the anniversary day of the loss. Reach out and remind them they aren’t alone with their memories.
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DON'T

- Don't cut off parents' expression of grief because of your discomfort.
- Don't avoid eye contact.
- Don't say "you can have another baby;" "at least you didn't know him/her long" or "be thankful for your other children."
- Don't judge parents' reaction to their loss by your own experiences, values or needs.
- Don't tell parents when they should be over their grief.
- Don't encourage parents to close themselves off from memories, even if they are painful.
- Don't tell parents they will be back to normal soon.
- Don't overlook the baby's father's needs by concentrating all your thoughts on the mother.
- Don't let your feelings of helplessness interfere with your reaching out to the grieving parents.
- Don't call the baby "it" or "fetus."
- Don't forget the loss of the baby because the parents never will.

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