

## Putting it to Words...

"No one can take away our pain but knowing that other good people have had similar experiences takes away some of the guilt..."

*R.K.O., Bereaved father*

"I have found a place where everyone cares and hurts with me. I don't feel so alone. I don't feel hopeless anymore."

*N.B., Bereaved mother*

"I couldn't function. I couldn't sleep or think. I thought my life was over. The grief is still all consuming, but I feel somehow connected to a group of the most compassionate people I have ever met. Thank you for helping our family through this horror."

*S.B., Bereaved Mother*

"The support groups have helped my wife and I communicate better and remember our son together. Sometimes, it is hard for me to talk about it, but the group meetings help us both have an outlet for the pain. Thank you! You have saved our family and our marriage."

*G.C. Bereaved father*

"I want to thank you for the blessing of your organization. The kindness you have shown is appreciated more than you will ever know!"

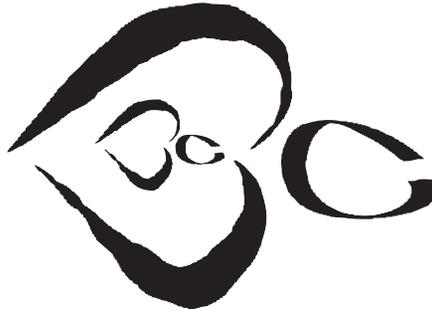
*S.Z., Bereaved Grandmother*

"You are truly our family's haven. Thank you."

*Y.S., Bereaved Mother*

"You helped my mommy and daddy to feel a little better and they still cry but we have fun again like before she died."

*A.C., Bereaved sister*



MISS Foundation  
77 E. Thomas Road, Suite 112  
Phoenix, AZ 85012  
[www.missfoundation.org](http://www.missfoundation.org)

*Helping Families  
Facing Death*

**About the MISS  
Foundation:  
A community  
support network**



1-888-455-MISS (6477)  
602-279-MISS (6477)  
[www.missfoundation.org](http://www.missfoundation.org)

*Because even in death, they still matter...*

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## Our Community Support Programs:

**Family Packets** - MISS Foundation information mailed to new families

**Crisis Outreach Team** - MISS volunteers respond to crisis situations to provide support

**Support Groups for parents, grandparents & siblings across the US and internationally**

**HOPE Mentors** - “Helping Other Parents Endure” - other bereaved parents become the one one point of support for families

**Online Forum** - online support group that is moderated by trained bereaved parents

**Perinatal Palliative CARES Program** – serves families who receive a prenatal diagnosis that is not compatible with life

**One-on-One Grief Counseling – in person or via Skype** - on sliding scale fee schedule

**Changing the Way our Culture Mourns Campaign** – “One Who Soars” & “In Mourning Bands”

**MISSing Angels Newsletter** – Families share personal stories of their children

**Bi-Weekly MISS Member ENews**

**Bi-Weekly MISS Volunteer ENews**

**Grief Workshops**

**Bi-Annual Grief Conference**

**MISSing Angels Bill Legislation - Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth** - for families who have experienced stillbirth

**Kindness Project** - families continuing their child’s legacy by performing random acts of kindness

**Kindness Walks** - Awareness/Fundraising Walks in Remembrance of the children gone too soon

**National Children’s Memorial Day**

**Barefoot Walkabout**

**Culturally sensitive research and advocacy**

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The MISS Foundation often gets asked **“How can I help?”** from well intentioned loved ones. They want to know what practical steps they can take to help the bereaved family. Here are some suggestions from the bereaved families themselves:

## How Best to Help a Grieving Family

One of the best ways to help a family touched by the death of a child is by offering them long-term, unconditional support. Listen. Provide practical aid such as cooking meals, helping with childcare, and running errands. Don’t try to fix them. Express your love. Give them permission to feel their sadness. Remember special days. Be there for them, and don’t rush their grief. For more information, visit our website: [www.missfoundation.org](http://www.missfoundation.org)

You don’t heal from death of a loved one because time has passed. You heal because of what you do with that time.

## Ways You Can Help

- Share news of the MISS Foundation to family and friends who have lost a child
- Donate to the MISS Foundation
- Volunteer for the MISS Foundation
- [www.missfoundation.org](http://www.missfoundation.org)

## Understanding Grief

Most traumatic events in life bring grief to a person. Here are some manifestations of grief that a person may experience after the death of a loved one:

- Sadness and depression
- Denial, shock, and confusion
- Anger and irritability
- Inability to sleep
- Nightmares or fear of sleep
- Loss of appetite

- Fear of being alone
- Somatic/physical complaints such as stomachaches and headaches
- Inability to concentrate or focus
- Guilt over failure to prevent the loss
- Depression or a loss of interest in daily activities
- Regressive behavior—acting much younger or reverting to earlier behaviors
- Forgetfulness
- Apathy
- Extreme emotional outbursts
- Hyper-sensitivity

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## MISS FOUNDATION

More than 120,000 children die every year in the United States. After the death of a child, families experience significant trauma and grief that can complicate and send ripples of grief through a community.

The MISS Foundation is a 501c3 organization that CARES for families and communities before, during and after the death of a child.

We provide family packets, outreach, support groups, HOPE Mentors, an online support forum, one-on-one counseling, newsletter, events, conferences, research, advocacy, Perinatal Palliative CARES Program, and opportunities for volunteerism that allow people affected by child death a place to begin to heal.

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*How can I help?*

## The Do's and Don'ts of Grief Support



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*Because even in death, they still matter...*

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### THE DO'S

- Do ask, “How are you REALLY doing?”
- Do remember that you can't take away their pain, but you can share it and help them feel less alone.
- Do let your genuine concern and care show.
- Do call the child by name.
- Do treat the couple equally. Fathers need as much support as mothers.
- Do be available...to listen, to run errands, to drive, help with the other children, or whatever else seems needed at the time.
- Do say you are sorry about what happened to their child and about their pain.
- Do accept their moods whatever they may be, you are not there to judge. Be sensitive to shifting moods.

- Do allow them to talk about the child that has died as much and as often as they want.
- Do talk about the special, endearing qualities of the child.
- Do give special attention to the child's brother and sister--at the funeral and in the months to come (they too are hurt and confused and in need of attention which their parents may not be able to give).
- Do reassure the parents that they did everything they could, that the care the child received was the best possible.
- Do put on your calendar the birth and death date of the child and remember the family the following year(s). That you remember the child is very supportive.
- Do extend invitations to them, but understand if they decline or change their minds at the last minute.
- Above all continue to call and visit!
- Do send a personal note or letter or make a contribution to a charity that is meaningful to the family.
- Do get literature about the disease and grief process to help you understand.

### THE DON'TS

- Don't be afraid to ask about the deceased child and to share memories.
- Don't simply ask “What can I do”, just do it! Often everyday tasks become overwhelming, such as grocery shopping or doing the dishes, just pitch in and do it.
- Don't think that the age of the child determines his/her value and impact.
- Don't be afraid to offer a hug or a neutral touch, it can often be more comforting than words.
- Don't avoid them because you feel helpless or uncomfortable, or don't know what to say.

- Don't change the subject when they mention their child.
- Don't push the parents through the grieving process, it takes a long time to heal and they never forget.
- Don't encourage the use of drugs or alcohol.
- Don't ask them how they feel if you aren't willing to listen.
- Don't say you know how they feel.
- Don't tell them what they should feel or do.
- Don't try to find something positive in the child's death.
- Don't point out that at least they have their other children (if they do).
- Don't say that they can always have another child.
- Don't suggest that they should be grateful for their other children.
- Don't think that death puts a ban on laughter. There is much enjoyment in the memory of the time they had together.

### Avoid the following clichés:

“Be brave, don't cry.”

“It was God's will” or “it was a blessing.”

“Get on with your life. This isn't the end of the world.”

“God needed another flower in his garden.”

“At least he/she wasn't older.”

“You must be strong for the other children.”

“You're doing so well.”

“You're young, you'll get over it.”

“Time will heal.”

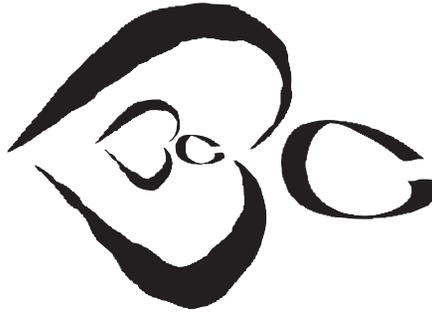
“Everything happens for a reason.”

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## Perinatal Palliative CARES Program Goals:

- To help families understand the diagnosis and probably outcomes for their baby
- To help families make decisions based on the love that they have for their baby
- To assist families in cherishing the time between the diagnosis and death of their baby
- To honor the unique and special qualities of each baby
- To emphasize the quality of life over the quantity of life
- To reduce the emotional, spiritual and psychosocial suffering using interventions sensitive to cultural, religious and personal beliefs

*Because even in death, they still matter...*



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*When Birth and  
Death Merge*

## Families Affected by Fatal Birth Anomalies

### *Perinatal Palliative CARES Program*



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## Why My Child?

Fatal birth anomalies are amongst the most painful losses we can experience. They can deny us a chance at a family and can leave sightless our vision for immortality through generations of the future. It may be difficult for parents not to blame themselves for the fatal diagnosis. This is compounded due to the fact that fatal birth defects are caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. It is important to remember that your baby is unique, special, and loved. No one should expect you to “forget” or “get over” their existence, but rather, encourage you to acknowledge their life as **your child**.

The Perinatal Palliative CARES Program is committed to helping families who are facing a poor prenatal diagnosis.

We realize the heartbreaking reality encountered when families are told their baby will not survive. Parents may feel an overwhelming sense of loneliness and despair when confronted with decisions that must be made concerning the poor prognosis of their child.

*Gone from our sight,  
but never our memories.  
Gone from our touch,  
but never our hearts...*

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## How We Can Help...

- Care Coordination between the medical community and the family
- Creating Birth Plans to express your wishes for your care and your baby’s care
- Individualized childbirth education
- Memory box containing keepsakes
- Memory book for capturing details of your journey
- Connections with community resources  
Strengthen Social Support Systems
- Anticipatory Grief Education & Emotional Support
- Creative activities to aid the expression of grief
- Book suggestions
- Journal & Journaling education
- Sibling resources and gifts for surviving siblings
- Assist in scheduling of professional photographers
- Connections with spiritual support within your belief system
- HOPE Mentoring with other families with similar experiences
- Assistance with funeral planning and memorialization ideas
- Support Groups
- Sliding Scale Grief Counseling

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If you are a clinician or if you know of a family facing a poor prenatal diagnosis, please call:

**602.279.MISS (6477)**

or email:

**[info@missfoundation.org](mailto:info@missfoundation.org)**

*“The love of a parent is not contingent upon the amount of time we had with our child. Love simply cannot be measured in time.”*

- Joanne Cacciatore

## M I S S F O U N D A T I O N

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## Putting it to Words...

There is no more devastating human experience than the death of a child. Yet, you are not alone in your grief. Sigmund Freud, Mark Twain, John F. and Jackie Kennedy, Abraham Lincoln, and Gandhi are just several historical figures who shared the tragic experience of a child's death. It is life's most stressful event causing emotional crises and the potential for long-term post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

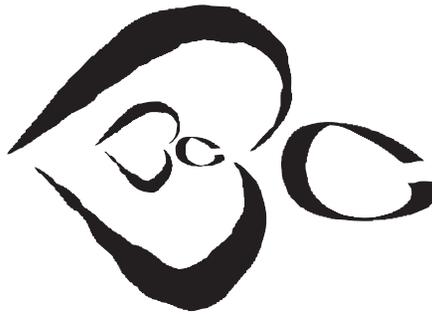
The word, bereavement, literally means "to be deprived by death." A child's death arouses an overwhelming sense of injustice—for lost potential,



unfulfilled dreams and senseless suffering. Parents may feel responsible for the child's death, no matter how irrational that may seem. Parents may also feel that they have lost a vital part of their own identity.

The MISS Foundation wants you to know that you are not alone. We can help your family get through this inconceivable sorrow while still holding the memory of your beloved child close to your heart. We go on, but we never forget...

***Because even in death, they still matter...***



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*Grief, Mourning, and  
Bereavement*

## No Greater Loss: *When a Child Dies...*



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## What you may feel:

When you experience the death of your child, you may experience a wide range of emotions. Many parents feel an initial stage of numbness after first learning of the death. There is no real order to the grieving process, however here are some emotions you may experience:

- Denial
- Disbelief
- Confusion
- Shock
- Anger or Rage
- Sadness and Depression
- Yearning
- Humiliation
- Despair
- Guilt and Shame
- Physical Symptoms such as a tightness in your chest, headaches, lethargy.

## When to get professional help:

- If your grief has left you feeling suicidal
- If you have prolonged periods (more than one week at a time) of a change in sleep patterns
- If you have prolonged periods of a change in appetite
- If you have recurrent dreams which make it difficult to function daily
- If you are currently attending a grief support group and feel it is not enough

## How to help yourself:

Parents often struggle to fit in the day to day routine they once knew. You may not feel like you even know who you are any longer in the absence of your precious child. Some of us learn to fit it back in to our lives by wearing an, "I am fine mask." Taking care of yourself right now should be a priority. This is an overwhelming experience for the entire family and community, yet you may often

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feel so alone. We are here to help you through this tragedy through our website and monthly support group meetings for children, parents, and grandparents. Call for more information. Here are some other ideas for taking care of yourself:

- Sleep: Give yourself plenty of time to rest. Grief is emotionally draining and you will need to recharge more often. If you don't want to get out of bed in those early stages of grief, then don't!
- Exercise: Take walks, work out, or spring clean. Physical exertion is a great stress reliever and may afford you some time alone to gather your thoughts in the process.
- Be patient with yourself: Your emotions may be unpredictable and unstable for months after the death of your child. You may also be more irritable than normal and concentration may be a difficult task.
- Keep a journal: This is self-therapy for grieving parents. Write every night, even if it is just a few lines.
- Cry, cry, cry: Tears are very healing. Allow yourself alone time everyday to cry. Also, realize that crying in front of children is not bad for them.
- Meditate: Quiet, deep thinking and meditation can help you reestablish emotional clarity. Couples can even do this together.
- Claim your feelings: Grieving parents struggle with many emotions. Try not to succumb to external forces encouraging you to hastily move through those emotions.
- Read: Be proactive. Read about others' experiences and ideas for grief.
- Avoid major changes: Don't make major decisions that will dramatically change your life now. Wait until the first few months of grief have passed before making life-altering decisions.
- Don't expect to get over it: You do live on, and will be happy again and you will survive, but you probably will never get over it. It is a gentle and gradual acceptance that happens over many years.

- Join a support group: Support groups help connect bereaved parents and children with like others. The MISS Foundation has 74 chapters around the world. We also have 27 online support groups in a section called the "forums." Visit [www.missfoundation.org](http://www.missfoundation.org) for more information.
- Ritualize: Find ways to memorialize your child. The MISS Foundation has "In Mourning Bands"™ available ([www.inmourningband.org](http://www.inmourningband.org)) as well as the Kindness Project™ as a wonderful way to honor a child who died too soon. See [www.missfoundation.org](http://www.missfoundation.org) for more information.

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## Helping Children Cope With Loss...

The death of a loved one is always difficult. For children, the loss of a sibling, parent, or friend can affect their sense of security, self-esteem, and it can de-center them. The family and the community can help children who are grieving. This type of support will enable the children to resume their lives more fully at home and at school. Parents, teachers, medical professionals, and community leaders all play an important role in the life of the grieving child.

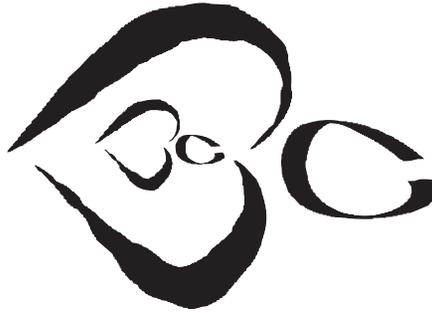
## Quick Tips for Adults

1. Children need comfort and frequent reassurance that they're safe, loved, and taken care of.
2. Be honest, simple, and direct when talking to them about death.
3. Encourage them to express their feelings through talking, drawing, and playing.
4. Try to maintain a normal routine.
5. Find local children's support groups to help.

## How to Help Children:

Avoid telling them that God took their loved one. Avoid associating death with sleep or something 'lost.' Remember children are very literal.

- Allow them to participate in rituals such as funerals, memorial services, and candlelightings. Children at all ages should be offered the opportunity to say goodbye to their loved one.
- Encourage questions. Do not discourage them from talking about their pain.
- Be patient and very gentle with them. Try not to yell at, hit, or isolate them even months after the death. Children may appear to be "misbehaving" but are actually manifesting grief symptoms.



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*Children are the forgotten grievers...*

## Helping Grieving Children



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*Because even in death, they still matter...*

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## How Children Respond To Death...

- Here are some common ways in which children
- may respond to a death:
- Sadness
- Denial, shock, and confusion
- Anger, irritability, and ‘bad’ behavior
- Inability to sleep
- Nightmares or fear of sleep
- Loss of appetite
- Fear of being alone
- Somatic/physical complaints such as stomach aches and headaches
- Inability to concentrate or focus
- Guilt over failure to prevent the loss
- Depression or a loss of interest in daily activities
- Regressive behavior—acting much younger or reverting to earlier behaviors
- Withdrawal from friends
- Sharp drop in school performance
- Talking frequently and asking repeated questions about the death, or making repeated statements of wanting to join the deceased.
- Profound emotional reactions

## How To Help a Grieving Child:

- Children are physical in their grief process. Interact with them when play and support their special ‘language’ of grief expression. Art and writing are particularly helpful.
- Young children are concrete thinkers. Avoid expressions such as “passed on,” “at rest,” or “we lost” when talking about the person who died. Be direct and honest. Offer only what they can absorb and keep it simple.

- Children can be fearful about death and feel insecurity about their future. Give them a chance to discuss those fears and validate their feelings. Offer the support of another adult they trust as children hesitate talking to their parents about their true grief feelings.
- Be patient with the child. Children are not able to express overwhelming sadness into words, so try to interpret perceived behavior problems as manifestations of grief. Be more flexible in punishment and we suggest positive reinforcement rather than harsh discipline. Yelling, hitting, or isolating a grieving child can exacerbate the symptoms and creates a vicious cycle for the family.
- Keep routines as much as possible. Try not to make any major decisions for 18 months. Children need to be assured that they have security, stability, and love.
- Adults can provide a good grief “model” for the grieving child. Share an ‘open emotion’ policy and allow yourself, and your child, to cry when needed. Your openness will validate their feelings.
- Children are intermittent grievers. Just because they don’t cry everyday doesn’t mean they aren’t hurting. Some children cry for one minute and jump right back into normal play.
- Expect their grief to revisit during their childhood and through adolescence. Triggers awaken old grief. Make yourself available.
- Shower them with affection and attention. If you are feeling too overwhelmed with your own grief, call a friend, a support group, your church, or someone else who can help!

Because death brings many complications for a family, we recommend a therapist evaluation, when possible, to determine how the child is coping with their grief. Particular symptoms to look for include:

1. Extended periods of depression in which he or she loses interest in daily activities and events.
2. Inability to sleep, loss of appetite, prolonged fear of being alone.
3. Acting much younger for extended period of time
4. Withdraws from friends at school.
5. Sharp drop in performance or refusal to attend school.

## Do you know of a child who needs help?

Please call: **1-888-455-MISS (6477)**

or **602-279-MISS (6477)**

MISS Foundation office phones are answered Monday-Friday from 8am - 4pm

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## What Can Be Done if you Think You Have PTSD?

### What can be done about PTSD?

Each situation is unique, however, someone suffering from symptoms should consider seeking counseling or psychotherapy. In addition, the person may want to evaluate what they are doing to help themselves through the resultant post-trauma grief.

Support groups are another way to help a person establish a safe place to express difficult emotions and ameliorate feelings and symptoms associated with the trauma.

Other things that may help:

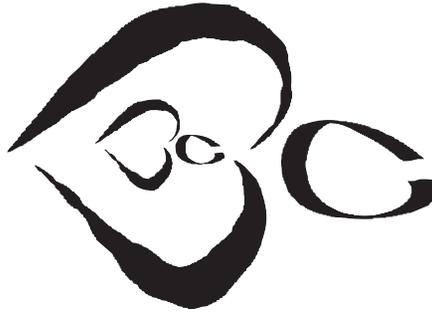
- Eating well and taking good multiple vitamins and minerals
- Daily exercise
- Establishing new routines or hobbies
- Daily Journaling

### Can Children Experience PTSD?

Yes. When children are involved, ensuring that the other family members are part of the therapy and intervention plan is critical to assist the child in more expedient resolution of the PTSD symptoms. Also, remember that children may not manifest the same symptoms as adults. And, as with adults, often it can be dismissed or misdiagnosed, according to the PTSD Alliance. Their PTSD symptoms may show in social, behavioral, and sleep changes.

It is important that children are well-supported during times of high-stress and trauma. A therapist can provide a good outlet for children. Books, resources, sharing or support groups and open family discussion may also help the child.

*Please call your doctor if you believe that you or someone you love is suffering from PTSD.*



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*Understanding Trauma  
& Bereavement...*

## Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



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- Forgetfulness
- Apathy
- Extreme emotional outbursts
- Hyper-sensitivity

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– Joanne Cacciatore

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### What is PTSD?

PTSD is a cluster of symptoms that can occur when a very traumatic incident occurs in a person’s life. Trauma often initially leaves a person feeling powerless, victimized, and emotionally, physically, and mentally paralyzed. Types of trauma that increase a person’s chance of experiencing PTSD include the death of a child, hurricanes and other natural disasters, fires, severe transportation accidents (auto, plane), victimization by criminal activity (rape, burglary, assault), witnessing violence, rape, prolonged trauma such as war, child sexual abuse, cult involvement, and verbal/ emotional familial abuse. PTSD can also frequently occur months after the death of a loved one.

### What are the effects?

The effects of PTSD can be subtle or they can be overt. They can include extreme mood swings, uncontrollable outbursts, irrational long-term fears, physiological symptoms (somatic) such as headaches, lethargy, digestive troubles, repetitive disturbing nightmares, and a change in appetite. Self destructive behaviors can also appear in some such as drug and alcohol abuse or self-mutilation.

According to the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Alliance, recognizing PTSD includes identifying clusters of symptoms that have been present for one month or longer which cause “severe problems or distress.” Some of the indicators include:

1. Reliving the event through nightmares or other uncontrollable and “intrusive” thoughts. Often this replay causes physical stressors such as heart palpitations, headaches, or sweating.

2. Avoidance of reminders of the event or death which includes a person going out of their way to avoid places, people, or activities associated with the trauma.
3. Hyper-arousal and sensitivity at all times making it difficult to concentrate, work, sleep, and increasing irritability, aggression, withdrawal, or isolation.

## MISS FOUNDATION

More than 120,000 children die every year in the United States. After the death of a child, families experience significant trauma and grief that can complicate and send ripples of grief through a community.

The MISS Foundation is a 501c3 organization that CARES for families and communities before, during and after the death of a child.

We provide family packets, outreach, support groups, HOPE Mentors, an online support forum, one-on-one counseling, newsletter, events, conferences, research, advocacy, Perinatal Palliative CARES Program, and opportunities for volunteerism that allow people affected by child death a place to begin to heal.

[www.missfoundation.org](http://www.missfoundation.org)  
1-888-455-MISS (6477) or 602-279-MISS (6477)  
[info@missfoundation.org](mailto:info@missfoundation.org)

## True Heroes in Your Community

“The entire crew stayed with us at the hospital after Kaylee died. About 20 minutes later, the doctor came in and told us there was nothing he could do. Her heart was too fragile. I nearly collapsed. The nurse came in and asked us if we wanted to see her. I was so afraid. I didn’t know what to do. One firefighter told us we needed to go in and see her to say goodbye. He said he’d go with us and that we wouldn’t be alone. So we went in the room to say goodbye to our precious daughter. He picked her up and gave her to me. Then he left the room to get a rocking chair so my husband and I could rock her. I will never forget the gift he gave to our family.”

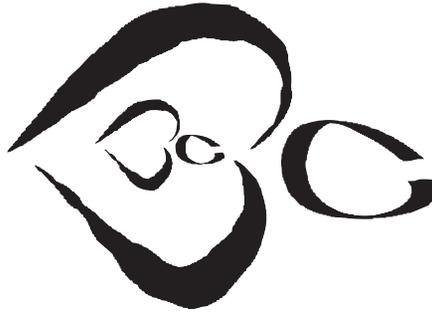
“John completed suicide on his 19th birthday. When we arrived at the hospital, we didn’t know what happened. A social worker took us in a room, where they told us what happened. She didn’t offer any words of comfort, but rather, she just held me as I sobbed in her arms. I didn’t realize it until months later, but she was actually crying with me. On the first anniversary of John’s death, she sent me a card telling me she remembered him.”

“I was scheduled for induction in three days. Suddenly, my water broke at home. I called my husband at work, but the contractions were fast and hard, so he had me call 9-1-1. The paramedics arrived within a few minutes.

*“I will be eternally grateful... they are the true heroes.”*

They helped me breathe through the contractions and got me to the hospital right away. We joked about the baby’s name and how wonderful this day would

be. When I arrived at the hospital, the paramedics stayed to see if I’d have the baby soon so they could come and meet him. My son died during the delivery. I was totally devastated. The paramedics returned two hours later to visit me. They held my son and cried with me. The pain, even three years later, is still overwhelming. But they are the true heroes of this story. I will be eternally grateful for their compassion.”



MISS Foundation  
77 E. Thomas Road, Suite 112  
Phoenix, AZ 85012  
[www.missfoundation.org](http://www.missfoundation.org)

*Helping Educate and Empower Professionals*

## Tools for Professionals: *How to Help the Bereaved Family*



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*Because even in death, they still matter...*

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## When a Child Dies...

### Words are Powerful

Words can be a powerful source of comfort or they can cause deep pain. The death of a child is devastating. By using trite platitudes, a professional can exacerbate a family's sense of disconnectedness. Please avoid the following euphemisms:

"It was God's will." or "God has a plan."

"He/She is in a better place."

"God needed an angel."

"Everything happens for a reason."

"Things will work out for the best."

"You're young. You can have more children."

"Aren't you grateful you have two other children?"

"You have to be strong (for your wife, children...)"

"Your child wouldn't want you to be sad."

"Aren't you over that yet?"

"At least it wasn't your older child."

"At least they aren't in pain anymore."

"You shouldn't be so sad. It is for the best."

### Does grief ever end?

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross looks at evidence from the past and present to support the notion that significant losses by death are lifetime losses. Secondary losses, developmental factors, as well as reminders and new losses that serve to reawaken 'old' grief are all shown to extend the grieving time after a major loss and consequently the bond with the deceased. How to be helpful? Avoid imposing a timeline on the bereaved. Never assume you "know" what they should or should not be feeling. Be there. Experience the death with them. Share. Allow them to own their feelings. This grief is a lifetime grief. Call the MISS Foundation for family support at **602-279-MISS (6477)**.

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## How to Help:

1. Do convey the child's prognosis or death gently, but honestly. Encourage them to ask questions and stay with them. It is important for them to feel like they did not 'experience' this traumatic event alone.
2. Do remember that you can't take away their pain, but you can share it and offer compassion and kindness.
3. Do call the child by name during your interaction with the family. It gives the child 'identity.'
4. Do focus on the family equally. Fathers, mothers, and surviving children are all traumatized.
5. Do become culturally competent. Know your demographics and ensure that the family is offered culture sensitivity during this difficult time. The MISS Foundation offers specific training classes on cultural competency.
6. Do offer a number where they can reach you later if they have questions or concerns about the incident.
7. Do offer a gentle shoulder to cry on or a hug.
8. Do allow them to talk about the child that has died as much and as often as they want.
9. Do not be afraid to share your own sorrow with the family.
10. Do give special attention to the child's brother and sister. Surviving siblings are hurt, confused, and in need of attention which their parents may not be able to give.
11. When appropriate, do reassure the parents that it is not their fault, that they did everything they could, and that the care the child received was the best possible.
12. Do follow up if you are able. A phone call or a card expressing sympathy makes a tremendous impact.
13. Use good judgment if the family is within your sight or if they can hear you. Do not make jokes, laugh, or discuss patient care in front of family members or the public.
14. Use good eye contact, a slow and gentle tone of voice, and repeat important things several times.
15. Allow the family an opportunity to say goodbye to their child. If they are fearful, offer to help or to hold their child for them. If the body is disfigured, offer a hand or a foot to touch.

16. Do ask questions. If you are not sure what they want, offer them options by asking specific questions on how you can help.
17. Do encourage others to provide practical support like child care, meals, running errands, and cleaning the house.
18. Do attend the child's funeral. This is as important for a professional for personal closure and resolution. Be honest with yourself about your own feelings of grief and loss and seek debriefing or outside counseling if needed.

Know your community resources for child death! Call The MISS Foundation at **1-888-455-6477 or 602-279-6477** when a child dies. With permission, the MISS will send information to the family on available resources for surviving children, parents, and grandparents!

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## Ordering Kindness Project Cards™

Order Your Cards Online:

[www.missfoundation.org/miss\\_shop/catalog.html](http://www.missfoundation.org/miss_shop/catalog.html)

Kindness Cards \$2

Package of 10

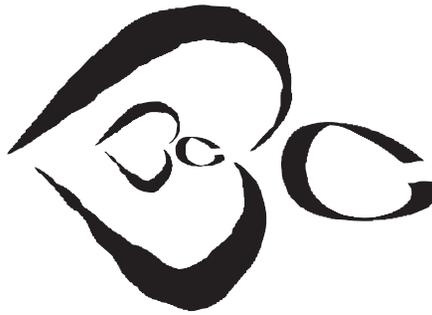


Spread Acts of Kindness in honor of your loved one through the Kindness Project™. Kindness cards are available in two styles.

Visit [www.kindnessprojectday.org](http://www.kindnessprojectday.org) for additional information.

### Who Can Participate?

- Grieving children can use these cards to remember a parent, sibling, or grandparent
- Bereaved parents can honor their child in many beautiful ways
- Grandparents who lost a grandchild can help their community
- Friends, aunts, and uncles can help sponsor events in a child's honor
- Co-workers can donate money or items to a good cause and help support their peer



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*A Community Outreach  
That Remembers...*

## The Kindness Project™



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*Because even in death, they still matter...*

## About the Kindness Project™

The Kindness Project™ began in October of 1997 as a way for families to honor their deceased child and to help themselves heal. More than 1,000,000 Kindness Project cards have been used around the globe to perform random acts of kindness in memory of a child, parent, friend, or spouse who died before their time. The idea is to perform random acts of, usually anonymous, kindness in the community. A little card is left behind so that the person who benefits from the kindness knows that someone's life and death continues to matter.

### How can I participate in the project?

You can participate by ordering Kindness Project cards or just doing nice deeds in your community with your child's loving memory at heart.

### What is the Kindness Project card?

The Kindness Project Card is a business sized card that reads:



The card can be left anonymously or given when you have done a 'kindness' for someone else as a legacy to your child.

### Can others participate in the Kindness Project?

Yes! This card can be used by siblings, grandparents, friends, aunts, uncles— by any person who wants to honor and remember the life of a very special child.

## Making a Difference™

*Some ideas that others have shared include:*

- Sponsoring a toy drive for needy children
- Paying for the person behind you at the fast food drive in (the "Fast Food Bandit")
- Leave an extra large tip in a restaurant
- Leave a bouquet of flowers or a stuffed animal on stranger's front door
- Bring cupcakes to a nursing home
- Send a balloon bouquet to an ill child at a hospital
- Ask the post office for a "Letter to Santa" from a young child and buy and mail the gift they requested
- Buy lunch or dinner for a family seated next to you in a restaurant. Leave the care card and make sure you leave before they do!
- Participate in our Annual July Blood Drive! (See the website for more information).

## How this Affects Others

"I am a waitress at a Cracker Barrel restaurant in a rural town...I have been sad and stressed with a recent divorce. Today I waited on a table with a very nice, attractive couple. When they finished their meal, they left me an incredibly generous tip wrapped around a one of your Kindness Cards. I discovered it after they'd left the restaurant. When I read the card, I went into the back room and I cried. I thought about my own daughter and how I would feel if she died. When I got home from work I called her to tell her how much I love her and I realized that my life is blessed after all. Then I looked up this site- to leave a note for whoever left me the large tip and the card of kindness. Thank you so much. I received a much greater gift that day than a generous tip!"

## For More Information

Our website at [www.missfoundation.org](http://www.missfoundation.org) features an entire section dedicated to the Kindness Project (also found at [www.kindnessprojectday.org](http://www.kindnessprojectday.org)). It includes an "ideas" page and a forum board where you can post your kind deeds in memory of your beloved and read the wonderful things people are doing to help others in memory of their loved one too! It is an incredible way to remember, educate, and build community!

Find us on Facebook: Kindness Project™ from the MISS Foundation

*"Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*

– Margaret Mead

## MISS FOUNDATION

More than 120,000 children die every year in the United States. After the death of a child, families experience significant trauma and grief that can affect family and individual functioning and an entire community. The MISS Foundation is committed to helping families through local support groups, camps for grieving kids, free bilingual books and resources, counseling, newsletters, web sites, and opportunities for volunteerism that allow people affected by the death of a child family member to begin to heal.

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