

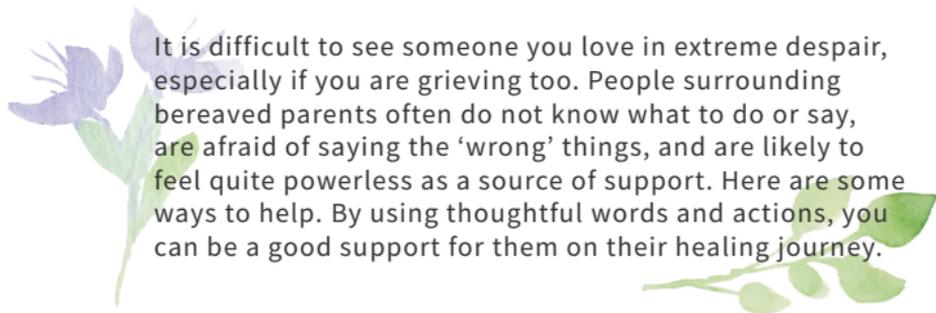
IT'S OKAY TO CRY WITH THEM

Moving forward:
A guide to supporting bereaved parents



Child Bereavement Support
(Singapore)





It is difficult to see someone you love in extreme despair, especially if you are grieving too. People surrounding bereaved parents often do not know what to do or say, are afraid of saying the 'wrong' things, and are likely to feel quite powerless as a source of support. Here are some ways to help. By using thoughtful words and actions, you can be a good support for them on their healing journey.

WHAT TO DO

1.

It's okay to cry with them

Often, people hold back their tears out of fear of making the grieving parent sadder. However, showing your tears actually consoles the bereaved parent, as it validates their feelings and lets them know that you are also deeply moved by their child's death.

2.

Acknowledge the child

Acknowledge the child's life and use the child's name without fear or discomfort. It is okay to speak of their child. In fact, talking about their child is a way for them to keep the memories of their child alive.

3.

Acknowledge their feelings

Acknowledge the enormity of their loss and grief – do not trivialise the loss. Encourage them to express their feelings and make time to listen to them. This can help them absorb and adjust to their new reality.

4.

Be patient

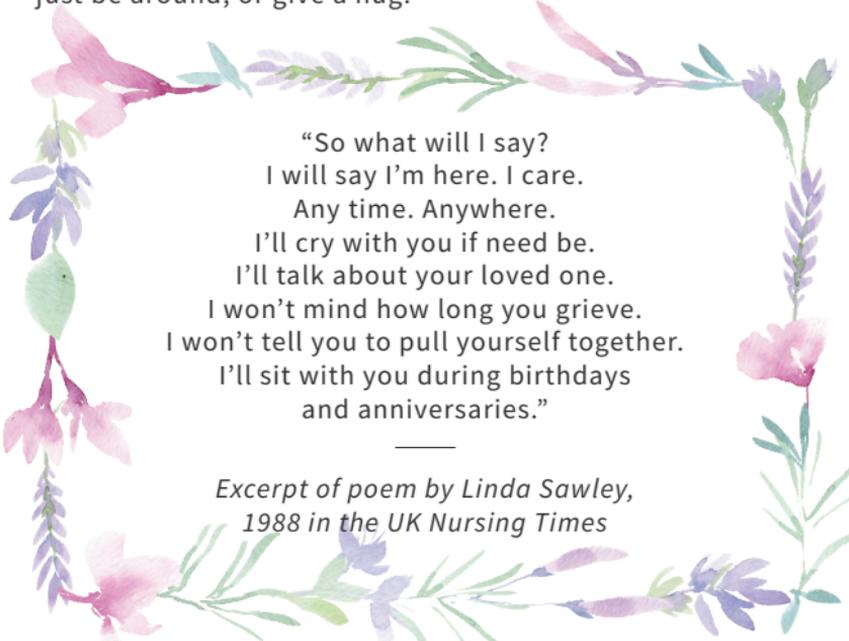
Allow them as much time as they need to work through their grief process. Understand that everyone grieves in their own individual way. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to grieve.

WHAT TO SAY

- I am so sorry for your loss.
- I wish I had the right words to say; just know I care.
- You are in my thoughts and prayers.
- I don't know how you feel but I'm here to help.
- I am a phone call away.
- I will always remember his/her... (smile, laughter, ...).
- Let me help you with... (practical tasks, e.g. preparing dinner or caring for their other children).
- You can choose to say nothing; your presence is comforting and powerful – just be around, or give a hug.

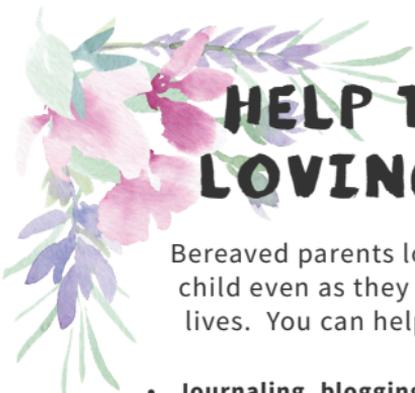
AVOID

- Be strong.
- I know how you feel.
- You'll be better soon.
- Go back to work and you'll be fine.
- There is a reason for everything.
- You can have another child.
- He/she is in a better place.
- It's been a while, aren't you over it?



“So what will I say?
I will say I'm here. I care.
Any time. Anywhere.
I'll cry with you if need be.
I'll talk about your loved one.
I won't mind how long you grieve.
I won't tell you to pull yourself together.
I'll sit with you during birthdays
and anniversaries.”

*Excerpt of poem by Linda Sawley,
1988 in the UK Nursing Times*



HELP THEM BUILD LOVING MEMORIES

Bereaved parents long to stay connected with their child even as they move forward and restore their lives. You can help them do this in various ways.

- **Journaling, blogging, creating**

Encourage them to write down their thoughts and reflections or be creative through art or poetry or other expressions, dedicating their works to their child. These practices are calming and therapeutic.

- **Acts of kindness**

Encourage them to perform a charitable act of service, make a donation or plant a tree in a park in their child's name. This act of 'paying it forward' brings consolation and peace.

- **Organise memories**

Help them put together an album of photographs, videos and belongings (where available, and only when they are ready to do so). The physical compilation of memories offers a special continuity with the child.



Child Bereavement Support (Singapore) is an independent, parent-to-parent volunteer group which offers friendship and support to any parent who has suffered the death of their child.

Website and resources: <https://www.cbss.sg>
Closed Facebook group: bit.ly/childbereavementsupportsg