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## Putting it to Words...

The death of a child is one of life's most devastating experiences. Yet, we are not alone in our grief. Sigmund Freud, W.E.B. Du Bois, 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. A child's death is an emotionally distressing tragedy that can incite physical, emotional, social, economic, and spiritual pain.

The word, bereavement, literally means "to be deprived by death." A child's death arouses an overwhelming sense of injustice—deprived of a future, with our children, we face the reality of



unfulfilled dreams, and inconsolable sadness. Some parents may feel guilt, shame or anger, no matter how irrational those emotions 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 stand together, united, in grief and committed to remembering our children. 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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602-279-MISS (6477)

[www.MISSFoundation.org](http://www.MISSFoundation.org)  
[www.SelahCarefarm.com](http://www.SelahCarefarm.com)

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

## 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, shock, and disbelief. There is no real order to the grieving process; however, here are some feelings you may experience:

- Disbelief
- Confusion
- Shock
- Anger or rage
- Sadness and despair
- Yearning and pining for your child
- Fear and terror
- Easily distractable
- Guilt and shame
- Physical symptoms such as chest tightness, headaches, digestive trouble, and lethargy may also occur.

## When to get (competent) professional help:

- If you are lacking in compassionate social support
- If you have prolonged periods (more than one week at a time) of sleep deprivation
- If you have recurrent nightmares which make it difficult to function daily
- If you are currently attending a grief support group and feel it is not enough
- Because few therapists are well trained to work with grieving families, to find a Compassionate Bereavement Care™ counselor, visit [certificate.MISSFoundation.org](http://certificate.MISSFoundation.org)

## How to help yourself:

We may struggle to fit in the day to day routine we once knew. Life has lost much of its meaning right now and certainly our identity feels different. Some of us learn to fit back into our lives by wearing an, “*I am fine mask.*” Good self-care is a

priority. It sometimes feels lonely in grief. So we are here to help you. We have online support groups called “The Forums” on our website and monthly support group meetings in many areas (see our website 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 early grief, then don’t!
- **Exercise:** Take walks, work out, or clean. Physical exertion is a great stress reliever and may afford you some time alone to gather your feelings and thoughts.
- **Be patient with yourself:** Your emotions may be unpredictable and unstable for months (or longer depending on the quality of your social support system) after the death of your child. You may also be more irritable than normal and concentration may be a difficult task.
- **Keep a journal:** Write every night, even if it is just a few lines.
- **Cry, cry, cry:** Tears are normal. Allow yourself alone time 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 sometimes struggle with many emotions. Try not to succumb to external forces encouraging you to hastily move through those emotions.
- **Read:** Read good books about being a bereaved parent.
- **Avoid major changes:** Don’t make major decisions that will dramatically change your life now. Wait six months or longer before significant decisions.
- **Don’t expect to get over it:** You can live on, and will may feel happy or even joyful again, but you probably will never get over the death of your child. You will learn how to cope, how to carry the weight of this pain.
- **Join a well-facilitated 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”™ 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.

## MISS FOUNDATION

After the death of a child from birth to adult children, families experience significant trauma and grief that send ripples of grief through a family and 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, education, support groups, HOPE Mentors, online support forums, one-on-one counseling, retreats, conferences, research, advocacy, Selah Carefarm, and opportunities for volunteerism that allow people affected by child death a safe place to feel, remember, and be heard.

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