



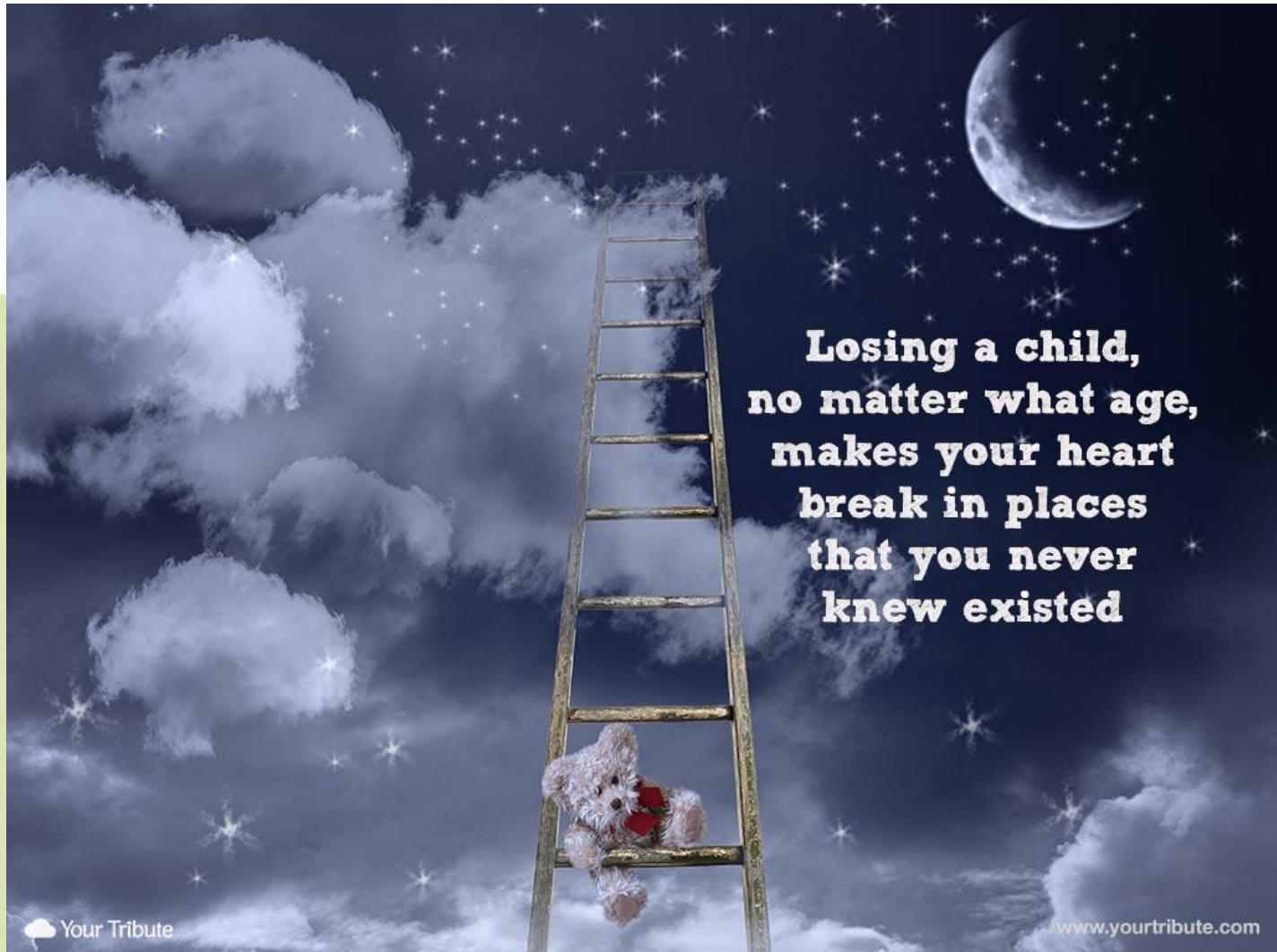
Appalachian Regional Healthcare

CHAPLAINCY SERVICES

Director Sam Stacy

***ARH Chaplaincy Services-
Connecting Patients and Staff
with the God of Grace, Mercy
and Peace.***

Loss of a Child



**Losing a child,
no matter what age,
makes your heart
break in places
that you never
knew existed**

Loss of a Child

If you have never experienced the death of a child, it's extremely difficult to know what to say to someone facing this type of loss. The death of a child is unnatural, unfair, and tragic.

It's completely natural for friends of or the pastor of the grieving parents to want to reach out and help, yet still, struggle to find the right words to say because what you say—and what you don't—can deeply affect someone in need.

Loss of a Child

What to Say to a Grieving Parent:

Parents who have lost a child want to feel supported in their grief and receive permission to grieve in their own way. They need to feel like their child's life was of unique importance and meant something to others who knew and loved him or her. You can meet the needs of a grieving parent by keeping the following in mind:

Loss of a Child

Offer a sincere condolence. "I am so sorry for your loss" is a good example.

Offer open-ended support. "If there is anything I can do, please let me know. I'm willing to help in any way."

Offer silence. Don't feel like you need to fill the empty spaces with talking. Get comfortable with silence and just be physically present with the grieving parents.

Loss of a Child

When the time is right, express what the deceased child meant to you. This might not be appropriate to do immediately following the child's death.

When the time is right, it can prove very meaningful to the parent to hear others express what the deceased child meant. You might also share a favorite memory or two to make it more personal.

Loss of a Child

The best rule of thumb is to prepare yourself by knowing what to say, but don't go in with a game plan or any expectations.

Be present, and let God lead you when it's time to speak and when it's time not to.

Loss of a Child

What Not to Say to a Grieving Parent:

Equally as important as what to say is what not to say, such as:

Never say you know how the bereaved parent feels.

Never say, "Well, it must have been for the best," or "It was God's will."

Trying to make sense of loss in these ways can make the grieving parents feel like you're minimizing their child's death.

Loss of a Child

Never say, "She's in a better place now." That might bring you comfort, but it might not provide comfort to a grieving parent, who is in the worst possible place on earth.

However if the parent says I know they are in heaven, certainly agree with them

Loss of a Child

Never trivialize their story by telling a story of your own.
This is their time to grieve so keep the focus on them.

Encourage them that its ok to grieve, to cry, to be angry,
to vent.

Be willing to cry with them as long as it's natural and real.

Loss of a Child

Never mention a timeline for grief or the stages of grief. Grief doesn't follow a timeline or move through predictable stages.

Loss of a Child

As a general rule, avoid philosophizing or trying to make things better. Accept the fact that you may feel awkward and helpless.

Most mistakes occur when you aren't prepared and say things to either hide or overcome these perfectly normal feelings.

Loss of a Child

When your friends, church member are going through unbearable tragedy, do not ask for guidance about what you should do. They have enough on their minds already. So don't ask, just do a few things such as: bring food regularly, send messages telling them that you're thinking of them, write letters sharing your memories of their child.

Loss of a Child

Keep Up the Support

Keep in mind that someone who loses a child will never get "back to normal" and will never "get over it." The loss of a child transforms a person for the rest of his or her life.

Because of this, you should love and support your bereaved friend or loved one for who they are and who they will become as he or she adjusts to the difficult, unfair loss of a child.

Loss of a Child

Be loving and non-judgmental: The most important thing you can do is to be present and available. Let parents show you pictures and talk about their child if they wish to do so. Be a good listener.

Loss of a Child

At the right time you may want to ask the parents what happened: The parents may need to talk about the details. If they don't want to talk about it, don't pressure them.

Acknowledge the child's life and refer to him or her by name. If the child was an infant, ask if the baby was named so that you can refer to him or her by name.

Loss of a Child

“He/She was such a fine kid with so much potential.”

“As a parent myself, I think what you’re going through must be horrible.”

“To have a new life end so suddenly is so very sad.”

“I/We are thinking of you. I/we wish there were words to comfort you.”

“I/We are shocked and saddened by your loss. We care and love you deeply.”

Loss of a Child

Planning a wake, funeral, and burial (even if cremated) can be helpful. If you are in an appropriate position to do so, encourage the parents to plan a memorial.

Loss of a Child

Encourage them to seek help, grief counseling, sharing with others that have experienced the same

The most important thing you can do to help a friend or loved one who is grieving the death of a child is be available, understanding, and non-judgmental. If they call, answer, if they need time alone, respect that.

Loss of a Child

There is a Korean proverb that says, “When a parent dies, they are buried in the ground. When a child dies, they are buried in the parent’s heart.”

Loss of a Child

Psalm 10:14 But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.

Loss of a Child

Psalm 31:9 Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief

Loss of a Child

Even Jesus mourned, in fact at the death of Lazarus, we read that He wept

Loss of a Child

Luke 8:52 Now all wept and mourned for her; but
He said, “Do not weep; she is not dead, but
sleeping.”

In this life we may not see our loved ones again,
yet we do not sorrow like the world sorrows, we
have a hope of being reunited with them in a
place where we will no longer experience
mourning, grief or death

Questions???