

## **My Heart Is Broken**

My child has died. My heart is broken. It will never mend completely. But today and for many days, weeks, months and years in the future, I need you to understand how you can help or hurt me. If you can't help, please don't unintentionally hurt me as I am vulnerable.

If my pain is overwhelming to you, and you don't know what to say or do, I understand. If you want to help but can't face this, I understand. But if you want to be part of my life during this period of mourning and grieving, I welcome your companionship and support.

Please take my hand and listen as I explain how you can help me in my sorrow. I am lost in a fog of sadness, but please try to understand my loss, my heartbreak and the healing path I must choose.



## *This Is What I Need From You*

*Candid Insight For You  
To Share With Those Who  
Are Willing To Help  
On Your Grief Journey*



## *This Is What I Need from You*

**Annette Mennen Baldwin**  
*In memory of my son, Todd Mennen*



*“We each grieve our child’s death in our own way. We each want the understanding and help of our family and friends. Often we don’t find this. But most often, we don’t tell others what we need.”*

## *Please Don't Change The Subject*

I am in mourning. You are uncomfortable with my sadness. My tears give you a sense of uneasiness. My child's name causes you to change the subject. This is not what I need.

I need you to listen to my words and hear my heart. I must weep, for that is all that will relieve this horrible sadness, if only for a few minutes. Please hold my hand, hug me or just sit quietly with me. I don't want answers because there are no answers. I need your companionship, your shoulder, your memories of my child. I need to talk about my child. I must talk about my child's death. I want you to participate in that conversation...over and over and over again until I can finally accept that my child is gone.

Once I have accepted my child's death, I need you to talk about my child's life with me. I need for you to pick up the thread of conversation, not just leave it hanging in the air like a spider's web. I want to hear your stories and tell you mine. I must know that my child will never be forgotten. My pain is so deep, so raw that you cannot begin to fathom it. Just know that I appreciate you. Rare is the person who can walk this rocky road with a bereaved parent.

## **Encourage Me**

If I choose to see a counselor, don't criticize my decision. Should I join a support group, congratulate me for reaching out. If I make a medically advised decision to choose a drug therapy, don't react negatively. If I decide I must be alone, please understand. If I seem obsessed about my child's personal items and pictures and favorite pastimes, go along with it. Help me create my child's album or video. If I know I should walk twice a week, be there and gently prod me. Walk with me. Suggest renting a sweet movie or a comedy. Bring some popcorn. Organize little events for us....I can't unscramble my brain to make a plan.....but I do need grief breaks. Bring me a journal...encourage me to date and write my thoughts. Please keep your words soft and your actions gentle. I am in a very fragile frame of mind.

## **Understand My New Life**

Do not get frustrated. Do not tell me to "get over it" or raise your voice at me. This is the worst event any parent ever endures. Under-



stand me. Listen to my heart. Just walk with me.

While it's not a pretty picture that I paint, please know that I will relapse in my grief. There will be days when I am impossi-

ble. This is not directed at you. Understand that my sadness is normal. I know it's diffi-

cult for you to be with me sometimes. I forget people's names, I forget what I did yesterday. I have little accidents. This, too, is normal. There will be days when I am angry, days when I am depressed. My moods will shift often. There will be good days and there will be some very bad days. Yet, if you make the effort, one day we will come out on the other side of this nightmare journey. We will walk in the light of hope. We will have a knowledge beyond that of most humans. From great adversity comes great wisdom. This is what keeps me moving forward.



A time will come when I am more stable, in less pain, less subject to weeping and sadness and able to live what some will call a normal life. My life will never be the same; I will never be the same person. Don't be disappointed when I am not the exact person I once was. I have been eternally changed.

Please remember that I will always want to hear my child's name and include my child's memory in my life. This is the most important thing you can do for me:

*Always Remember and Acknowledge  
My Precious Child.*

***This is What  
I Need from You***