

What to Say After You Say, “I’m Sorry”

A Guide to Help You
Help Parents After
the Loss of a Child

Leslie Rosenberg

For our beloved Michael

December 29, 1988 - April 15, 2015

When a parent loses a child,
they are experiencing the unimaginable.

You can say, “I can’t imagine what you’re going through” – and you’ll be right.

Please don’t say,
“I know what you’re feeling. When my grandma died...” or “When my cat died...”

These are not the same kinds of deaths.
A parent’s grief is uniquely painful.

**When a parent loses a child,
please don't say,
"They're in a better place."**

Every parent believes the "better place"
is by their side.

**When a parent loses a very young child,
please don't say,**

"You can always have another."

Every child is special to a parent, and no other child will ever take their place.

Similarly, don't ask how many other children they have.

"More kids" doesn't lessen the loss.

**When a parent loses an older child,
please don't say,
"At least you had them
for all those years."**

Every grieving parent wishes their child
would have lived a longer life.

**When a parent is grieving the loss of a child,
please don't ask,**

“What can I do for you?”

Just do something thoughtful – and don't
expect a thank you.

**When a parent loses a child,
please don't say,**

"I don't know what to say."

Just say, "I'm sorry" and give them a hug.

Say, "Your child was wonderful
and this is why..."

Say, "I will always remember
the way your child..."

Say, "Your child
will never be forgotten."

Say the child's name.

Say, "You are a wonderful parent
and your child was lucky to have you."

Or, just be by their side.
It's okay to say no words.

Gifts that mean a lot to a grieving parent:

- Photos of their child they have never seen
- Stories about their child doing something good or funny
- Something handmade that celebrates the child's uniqueness, such as a quilt made from their t-shirts
- Food they don't have to prepare
- Cleaning their house, doing their laundry and caring for other children or elderly relatives
- Helping the family receive visitors

**When a parent grieves the loss of child for a long time, don't say,
"Get over it."**

Everyone grieves differently and in different amounts of time.

A parent never "gets over" the loss of a child.
Grief isn't about "moving on."

When a parent loses a child,
don't talk about "healing."

A grieving parent is never healed.
The hurt just gets softer around the edges.

When a parent loses a child,
don't avoid them.

They sometimes
need other people to be around.

Of course, sometimes they just want to be alone.

Understand that these feelings can change at
any time.

When a parent loses a child,
sometimes they only want to talk about
their child.

And sometimes they don't want to be
reminded of their loss.

Let them lead the conversation.

Just know that talking about their child will
not make the grieving worse.

When a parent loses a child,
please understand:

- A certain day of the week or certain numbers on the calendar may prompt fear or pain.
- Hearing about your own child's accomplishments and milestones can be hurtful.
- An object, piece of clothing, place, smell or sound can be a trigger.

When a parent loses a child,
please don't abandon them.

Keep in touch.

Ask how they are doing today.

Ask how they are doing in general.

There's a difference.

They need your support and friendship
now, more than ever.

You can help a grieving parent
by remembering their child on:

- Birthdays
- Anniversaries
- Holidays

Say, “I know this is not an easy day for you.
I am here if you want to talk.”

When a parent loses a child,

please be aware they are susceptible to things that can numb the pain, like drugs, alcohol, gambling, overspending money and other destructive habits.

Friendships, marriage and relationships with other children can suffer, too.

Counseling or support groups can help prevent or resolve some of these situations.

When a parent loses a child,
they may ask, “Why did this happen?”

They may be looking for someone or
something to blame.

Sometimes the best answer is simply a hug.

© Copyright 2019 Leslie Rosenberg
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be
reproduced without permission from the author.

To order additional copies of this book, please email
lkrosenberg59@gmail.com

What to Say After You Say, “I’m Sorry”

A Guide to Help You Help Parents After the Loss of a Child

About the author:

Leslie Rosenberg lost her 26-year-old son, Michael Howard Rosenberg, on April 15, 2015 after his four-year battle with brain cancer.

This book is based on Leslie’s own experiences, as well as years of communications with other grieving parents who shared their stories of dealing with well-meaning friends and relatives after the death of a child. It is hoped that the suggestions in this book will assist anyone wishing to bring comfort to those suffering from such tremendous loss.