



The Compassionate Friends

Offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents

WHEN YOUR CHILD DIES OF HIV/AIDS

When a child dies of HIV/AIDS the parents and other family members will be suffering the same overwhelming grief as parents whose child has died from other causes and circumstances. However, there are different feelings involved as well. With your grief may come feelings of guilt, anger and humiliation. Also perhaps fear that other members of your family may be infected and may also die. You will have to deal with these feelings as well as with the fact that your beloved child is no longer with you.

These are feelings which are felt by all families whose child has died:

GUILT: Why didn't you notice and why didn't your child have sufficient faith in you to be able to tell you so that you could make his/her remaining time more comfortable and full of love? Perhaps you unknowingly indicated that you agreed that there was a stigma attached to HIV/AIDS?

HUMILIATION/FEAR: Because of the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS many people still view death from this virus with distrust and suspicion. This is unfortunate because it would be easier to combat if there was more openness and empathy.

Fear that someone you love or you yourself may be HIV+.

Most important at the moment is the fact that your child has died. The Compassionate Friends will do their best to assist you by listening without censure or disapproval. Our monthly newsletter will give you details of meetings and with our brochures will also offer you some comfort and understanding.

COPING CONSTRUCTIVELY:

It is possible to work through your grief. You are changed by this experience but the ability to heal is never lost. Your wounds will become scars which you will always bear but they are bearable. It will help you to cope if you accept that you will come through this nightmare and can make the choice to find life meaningful again. Deal with each day step by step and do not look far ahead.

As a family talk about your loss and your pain. Talk about the good times you remember as well as the not so good. Memories are very precious. Try to understand that all family members will be grieving in their own way. It is better to express feelings. Crying is healthy and therapeutic.

Give yourself time and remember that it takes months, even years, to open your and mind to healing. Through sharing with others who have walked the same path, and all at The Compassionate Friends have done so, you may gain understanding of your reactions and learn ways to cope.

It is important to get counselling for yourself and other members of your family. TCF will give you a referral number of an HIV/AIDS counsellor in your area. You will be able to obtain from them assistance in learning more about this virus. Also, if you or another member of your family is infected, these counsellors will help you to deal with the situation.

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