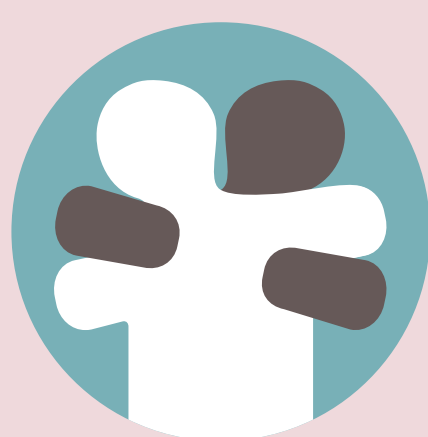


# *Caring for Parents*

Advice for a  
difficult time



Bereavement Support Service

## THE LOSS OF A CHILD

Children are not supposed to die. Parents expect to see their children grow and mature. Ultimately, parents expect to die and leave their children behind.

This is the natural course of life events, the life cycle continuing as it should.

The loss of a child is the loss of innocence, the death of the most vulnerable and dependent. The death of a child signifies the loss of the future, of hopes and dreams, of new strength, and of perfection.



## **BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICE**

The Bereavement Support Service extends the care we give to the families we serve.

Some of our families may not need this additional service, others will need and benefit from it.

Although very important, the funeral is only the first step we take in saying 'goodbye'. As you begin to work through your grief, the road ahead may seem long and lonely.

Relatives and friends will be especially helpful at the time of death and at the funeral. However, as the weeks and months pass after the death, they may not always be available to comfort you and allow you to talk about the person you love and miss so much.

We can provide support; a phone call, a letter or email, or a visit. There is always someone to talk to.



Bereavement Support Service

**Huia Room** | Hope and Sons  
523 Andersons Bay Road, Dunedin  
[www.hopeandsons.co.nz](http://www.hopeandsons.co.nz) | [office@hopeandsons.co.nz](mailto:office@hopeandsons.co.nz)  
**Tel (03) 455 5074**

## **DON'T...**

DON'T avoid them because you are uncomfortable. Being avoided by friends adds pain to an already intolerably painful experience.

DON'T say you know how they feel (unless you've lost a child yourself, you don't really know how they feel).

DON'T say 'you ought to be feeling better by now' or anything else which implies a judgment about their feelings.

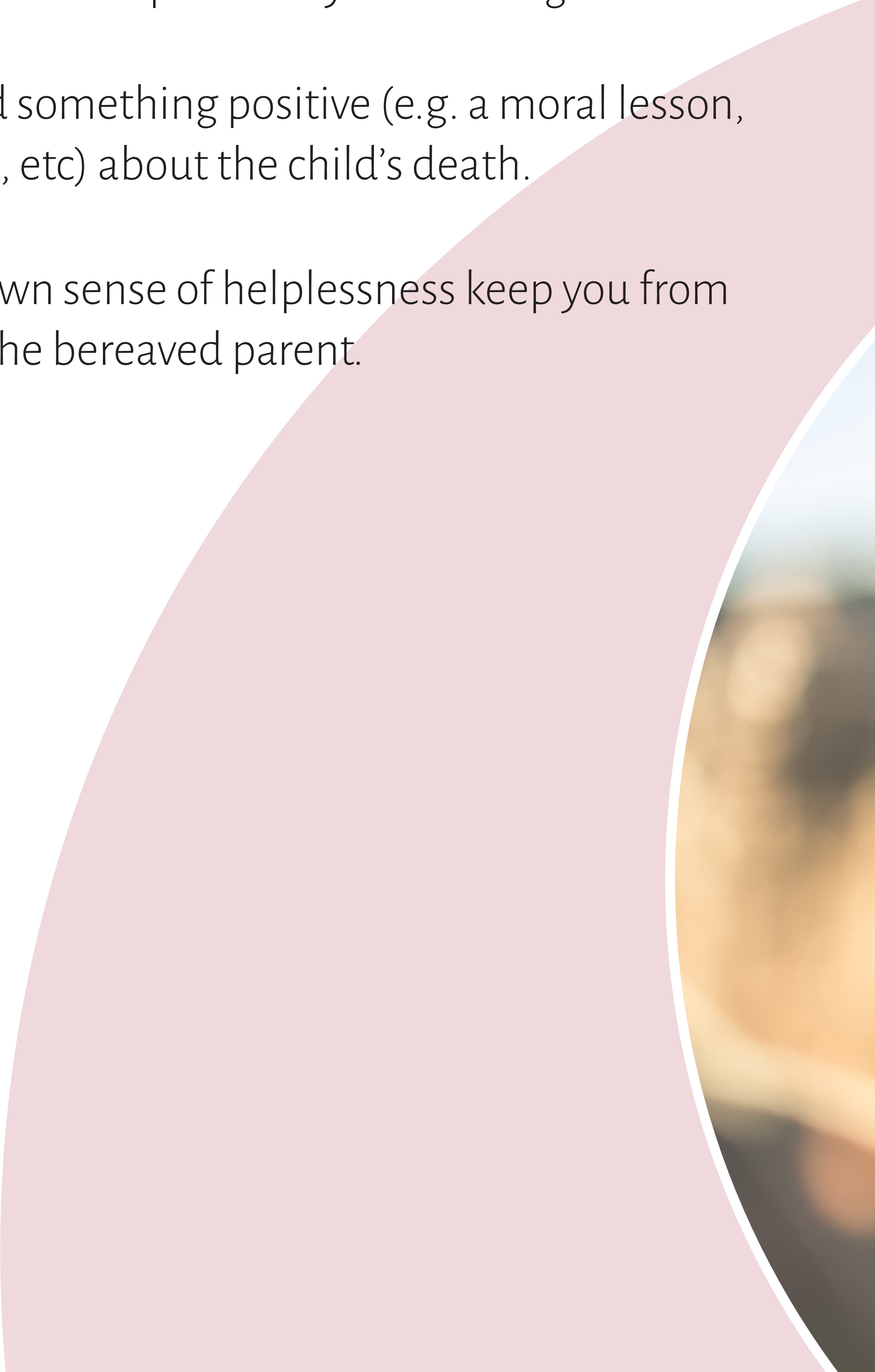
DON'T tell them what they should feel or do.

DON'T change the subject when they mention their dead child.

DON'T avoid mentioning the child's name out of fear of reminding them of their pain - they haven't forgotten it.

DON'T try to find something positive (e.g. a moral lesson, closer family ties, etc) about the child's death.

DON'T let your own sense of helplessness keep you from reaching out to the bereaved parent.



DON'T point out that 'at least that they have other children'. Children are not interchangeable; they can not replace each other.

DON'T suggest that they should be grateful for their other children. Grief over the loss of one child does not discount parent's love and appreciation of their living children.

DON'T make any comments which in any way suggest that the care given to their child at home, in the emergency room, or whatever, was inadequate. Parents are plagued by feelings of doubt and guilt without any help from their family and friends.



# ***Caring for Parents***

## *Advice for a difficult time*

### **DO...**

DO let your genuine concern and caring show.

DO listen to their story, sometimes over and over again.

DO be available; to listen, to run errands, to help with the other children, or whatever else seems needed at the time.

DO say you are sorry about what happened to their child and about their pain.

DO allow them to express as much grief as they are feeling at the moment and are willing to share. Remember that nobody has to justify their feelings.

DO encourage them to be patient with themselves, to not to expect too much of themselves and to not impose any “shoulds” on themselves.

DO talk to them as often as they want about their child they have lost, and use their child’s name.

DO give special attention to the child’s siblings – at the funeral and in the months to come. They too are hurt and confused and in need of attention which their parents may not be able to give at this time.

DO reassure them that they did everything that they could, that the medical care their child received was the best it could have been, or whatever else you know to be true and positive about the care given to their child.