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*Rachel's Gift, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit organization.*

*All proceeds go directly into the operation of this organization to support the services and resources provided for families in need and education of hospital staff.*

*Family and Friends*



*Rachel's Gift*

*Providing comfort during the greatest of losses*

*We understand your immediate yearning to help your friends or family in need. Here are some very practical ways to help.*

#### **Immediate Ways to Help:**

- Use the baby's name.
- Ask the parents if they would like help telling others about the baby's death.
- Attend the funeral or memorial service.
- Listen.
- Be patient.

*What may seem like effortless, everyday tasks will be difficult for the parents for a while. In most cases, it's better just to "do," rather than ask.*

#### **To Say or Not to Say**

*Please be thoughtful with your words when trying to comfort the parents. Be sure to use the baby's name. Don't just say "the baby."*

##### **To Say:**

- I am so sorry.
- What do you need?
- I'm here when you are ready to talk.
- How are you feeling?
- When are your most difficult times?
- I can't imagine how you feel.
- I am hurting for you.
- I am here for you.

##### **Not to Say:**

- Everything happens for a reason.
- I know how you feel.
- Now you have an angel in heaven.
- You can have another baby.
- At least you have other children.
- Time heals all wounds.
- At least you had some time with your baby.
- It was probably for the best.
- At least you didn't have time to get to know your baby and get attached.
- Try not to think about it.
- The baby is in a better place.

#### **Suggestions to Pay Respect:**

- Plant a tree in memory of their baby.
- Make a donation to a charity in memory of their baby.
- Give a gift of a keepsake with their baby's name for Mom or Dad.
- Offer to take them to the cemetery or where the ashes were scattered; sometimes it's hard to face alone.
- Give a gift certificate to the mother's favorite salon or father's favorite golf course.

#### **Later Ways to Help:**

- With permission, return unused and unwanted maternity clothes or baby items.
- Bring meals.
- Pick up groceries. (easy-to-prepare or already-prepared food)
- Offer to take the Angel Mom to postpartum doctor visits. This usually occurs at the six-week mark. For an Angel Mom, revisiting the doctor's office that she frequented throughout her pregnancy is a traumatic experience and she should not go alone.
- Make arrangements to get the other children out of the house. Take them to the movies, bowling, to a park etc. This will not only help the parents, but it will also be a welcome distraction for the kids.
- Arrange for housekeeping services. This can be expensive, so enlist other friends and family to go in together, or take turns doing it yourselves.
- Take over yard work or simple home maintenance tasks for a period of time or hire someone else to do it.
- Go take a walk with the Angel Mom. It will be good for her to get out and get some fresh air and exercise. It will also give her a chance to talk or just listen. If possible, make it a weekly date.
- Take the couple out for coffee or lunch. Pick them up.
- Run errands for the couple or go with them.
- Invite them to your home for dinner. A change of scenery can be helpful.
- Plan a girl's night or guy's night out. This will give them a break and some fresh conversation and fun.
- Send a card. Let them know that you are thinking of them in the recent days of their Angel's death and long after.
- Remember the anniversary of the baby's death. Respond by sending cards, email, flowers, etc.
- Remember them on the holidays. Regular holidays can be particularly difficult, especially on Mother's Day and Father's Day, even long after the baby's death.

*The 3-4 month frame is when shock completely lifts, and this can be a particularly difficult time. Watch for signs of chronic depression, fatigue, and hopelessness. If you feel that the parents need professional help, don't hesitate to get involved. A good place to start is their physician(s). Six months and one-year anniversary dates are very painful. Try to mark the one-year anniversary by doing something special for the parents.*